

A good practice guide for ethical and inclusive communications involving small-scale fisheries



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Introduction

For millennia, the world's marine and freshwater resources have supported a way of life for tens of millions of people. Recently, there has been a surge of data and evidence about the values and diversity of small-scale fisheries.

But, in many instances, the contributions of small-scale fisheries to human wellbeing, food provision and environmental stewardship are overlooked, ignored or misrepresented in popular media, policy documents and development discussions. Even when this oversight is implicit or when misrepresentation is unintentional, there are consequences. These include increased marginalization, reduced demand for products and economic losses, and foregone opportunities to improve nutrition and development outcomes.

Today, small-scale fisheries are experiencing substantial climate, economic, and political changes. The power of communications can greatly influence how fisherfolk and small-scale fisheries are central or marginal, enabled or disabled among these changes. Messages and discourse can shape perspectives on, and images of, small-scale fisheries, leading actors (including those who have power) to hold certain ideas and views on how they should be governed, thereby influencing outcomes.

This guide provides practical and simple guidance on how to communicate about small-scale fisheries in an inclusive, responsible and ethical way that respects and recognizes the 120 million women, men and youth employed and engaged in the sector.¹

This guide aims to improve the relationship between communicated messages, the latest research and current knowledge, the views of fisherfolk, and resultant actions and responses. An improved connection between these elements is vital to:

- ensure communications are accurate, ethical, and aligned to best practices;
- support the realization of international agreements;
- join efforts towards conservation and sustainable resource use for healthy people and planet;
- support the co-production of knowledge with small-scale fisheries stakeholders;
- build well-informed, strong and viable small-scale fisheries.



When communications are ethical and inclusive, they can help to improve the recognition and influence that fisherfolk experience in key decision-making spaces where issues are addressed and solutions are negotiated. The guidance in this document has been developed through conversations and engagement with fisherfolk and the organizations that represent and work with them.

At the heart of this communication guide is the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines). The SSF Guidelines are an internationally-agreed instrument that details the principles to work together and ensure secure and sustainable small-scale fisheries. This guide illustrates how communications can be aligned to the principles and recommendations in the SSF Guidelines, supporting their implementation at all levels.

Who is the guide for?

The guide has been developed for people and organizations working to raise awareness of small-scale fisheries and influence policy and practice, including environment and development non-governmental organizations (NGO), researchers, and journalists.

Equally, the guide is important for people and organizations working in spaces that intersect with small-scale fisheries. These spaces include, for example, food and nutrition security, water governance, aquaculture, agriculture, marine and inland conservation, coastal development, economic issues for fisheries, blue economy, climate change, and human rights. The communications of these organizations can impact small-scale fisheries, even (and in some instances particularly) when not explicitly communicating about or with small-scale fisheries.

How was the guide developed?

The guide draws on inputs from groups from different regions and contexts that represent or work in support of small-scale fisheries. Content has also been drawn from publications and meeting proceedings ([see Annex I](#)), where fisherfolk and their organizations have participated and expressed their views about communications, including the need for a better representation of small-scale fisheries actors, livelihoods, and values.



01

About small-scale fisheries and the SSF Guidelines

All stakeholders and small-scale fisheries communities should recognize the importance of communication and information, which are necessary for effective decision-making.

- SSF Guidelines, Section 11.2



Diverse and dynamic

Small-scale and artisanal fisheries encompass all activities and workers along the value chain—from pre-harvest activities, to fishing and harvesting, to the processing, marketing and sale of fish and aquatic products. These different forms of labor and roles are undertaken by women and by men. Small-scale fisheries play an important role in food security and nutrition, poverty eradication, equitable development, and sustainable resource utilization. Small-scale fisheries provide nutritious food for local, national, and international markets and generate income to support local and national economies.

Small-scale fisheries frequently include strong ties to local communities, traditions, and values. Many small-scale fishers and fishworkers are self-employed and usually provide fish for direct consumption within their households or communities. Women are significant participants in the sector, particularly in postharvest and processing activities. It is estimated that about 90 percent of all people directly dependent on capture fisheries work in the small-scale fisheries sector. As such, small-scale fisheries serve as an economic and social engine, providing food and nutrition security, employment and other multiplier effects to local economies while underpinning the livelihoods of marine and inland communities.

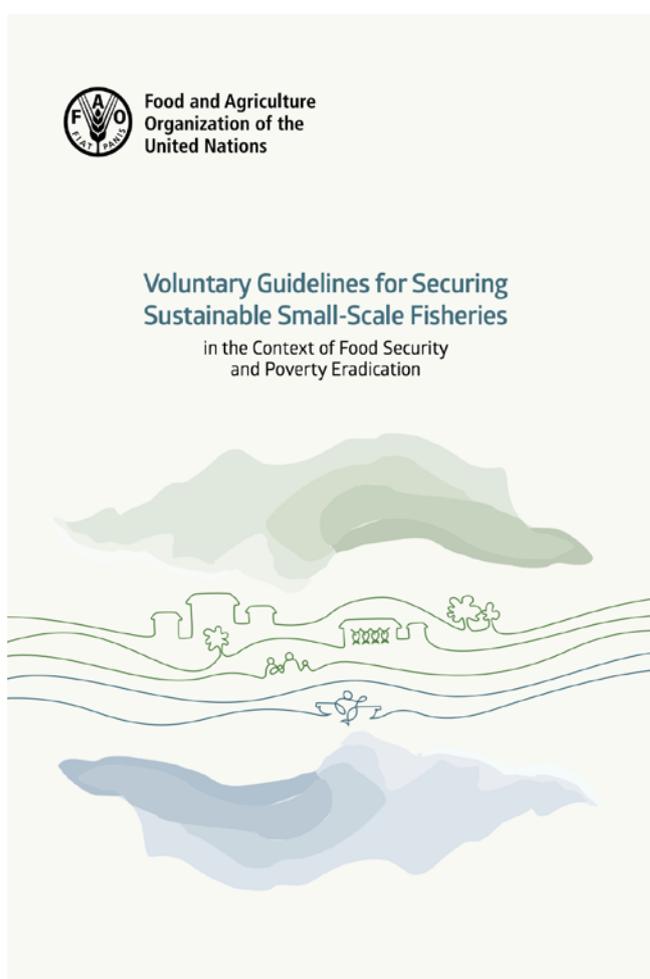
Small-scale fisheries are diverse and dynamic, often characterized by seasonal migration and multiple livelihoods, in that fishers and fishworkers may also be farmers or move in and out of paid employment. For many small-scale fishers and fishworkers, fisheries represent a way of life, and the subsector embodies a diverse and cultural richness that is of global significance.

Source: Revised from the SSF Guidelines²





About the SSF Guidelines



The SSF Guidelines are the first international instrument dedicated to small-scale fisheries. The guidelines were developed through a participatory and consultative process, involving more than 4 000 representatives (of small-scale fishing communities, civil society organizations, governments, regional organizations, and other stakeholders) from more than 120 countries. In 2014, the guidelines were endorsed by 143 member states that make up the FAO Committee on Fisheries.

Critically, the SSF Guidelines are intended to support the visibility, recognition, and enhancement of the important role of small-scale fisheries, particularly in developing countries. Communication and information about small-scale fisheries, which are necessary for effective decision-making, play a key role in supporting the implementation of the SSF Guidelines ([see Annex 2](#)).

SSF Guidelines principles

Human rights and dignity

Respect of cultures

Non-discrimination

Gender equality and equity

Equity and equality

Consultation and participation

Rule of law

Transparency

Accountability

Economic, social and environmental sustainability

Holistic and integrated approaches

Social responsibility

Feasibility and social and economic viability



In addition to the SSF Guidelines, ethical and inclusive communications are fundamental to and emphasized in a range of international agreements related to human rights, tenure rights, food security, rights to work and other foundations of human and environmental wellbeing ([see Annex 3](#)).

These include:

- 2021 COFI Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture
- Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems
- Sustainable Development Goals
- The Rome Declaration: Ten Steps to Responsible Inland Fisheries
- UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas
- Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition
- Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (Tenure Guidelines).



02

Accurate messages to support improved narratives

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“The lack of a positive narrative is the most significant threat to small-scale fisheries. We need to find solutions through responsible advocacy, collaborating to build capacity in responsible stewardship, and enabling small-scale fishers to defend their own livelihoods.”

- Mitch Lay, Fisher and Program Coordinator, Caribbean Network of FisherFolk Organisations and Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute³



This section presents a series of problematic and sometimes incorrect messages—observed at and gathered from high-level events, reports, research papers, and identified by small-scale fisheries actors themselves—and presents the more accurate messages that must be used to avoid harmful impacts. Legitimate sources of additional information and messages about small-scale fisheries are listed in [Annex 4](#).

Why do accurate messages matter?

The impacts and risks of incorrect messages include, for example:

- ❧ Seeing small-scale fisheries as a ‘threat’ to conservation efforts can create silos between environmental NGOs and fisheries organizations, undermining collective efforts.
- ❧ Viewing small-scale fisheries as traditional and in need of modernization can result in inappropriate and costly technology being pushed onto fisherfolk, where uptake and impact fail and investments are wasted.⁴
- ❧ Focusing disproportionately on poverty and vulnerability unintentionally portrays a sense of weakness or helplessness, which can be disempowering.
- ❧ Emphasizing the difficulty of managing small-scale fisheries tends to divert attention away from addressing the challenge and working towards management solutions.
- ❧ Emphasizing the ‘exploitation’ narrative tends to undermine and reduce attention and investments made in sustainable resource management.

Messages and discourse can shape perspectives on, and images of, small-scale fisheries, leading actors (including those who have power and influence) to hold certain ideas and views on how they should be governed, thereby influencing outcomes.⁵

Much harm can come from inaccurate messages and false narratives. Powerful images at the highest level of decision-making may not match those of fisherfolk themselves, and the inherent power imbalances can impact poor and marginalized communities disproportionately.^{5,6}



Accurate messages about small-scale fisheries

Catch and activities

- ✗ Problematic messages
- ✓ More accurate messages

- ✗ Fishing (i.e. the act of harvesting) is the only activity in small-scale fisheries
- ✓ Small-scale fisheries encompass wide-ranging activities, including pre-harvest activities and labor (e.g. boat making) and post-harvest activities and labor (e.g. processing, distribution, selling).⁷
- ✗ Fisheries are predominantly coastal and marine
- ✓ Inland fisheries have an equally important role as coastal fisheries in providing jobs, food and nutrition, and sustaining biodiversity. Inland waters provide 12 percent of global fish catch, employ up to 60 million people, and provide habitat for 40 percent of the world's freshwater fish species.⁸
- ✗ Small-scale fisheries catch is only (fin)fish
- ✓ A large diversity of aquatic foods is harvested by small-scale fisheries, including finfish, seaweeds, molluscs like cockles and octopus, and crustaceans like crabs and crayfish.
- ✗ Small-scale fisheries are traditional and, therefore, primitive
- ✓ Many small-scale fisherfolk and their communities run successful businesses, are early adopters of technology,⁹ generate substantial foreign exchange, and have professional skills and knowledge.
- ✗ Small-scale fisherfolk are the poorest of the poor, living in vulnerable communities
- ✓ Many small-scale fisheries communities around the world experience poverty, but not all fisherfolk are poor nor are all small-scale fisheries unprofitable.¹⁰ Where poverty exists in small-scale fisheries, it is of a multidimensional nature and is not only caused by low incomes but also due to factors such as remoteness, and limited access to markets, health, education, and other social services. Small-scale fisheries have several strengths that fisherfolk can build on.



Environmental governance and sustainability

- ✗ Problematic messages
- ✓ More accurate messages

- ✗ The lack of data is the main obstacle facing small-scale fisheries, and if we address the data gap, we will overcome the management challenges facing small-scale fisheries
- ✓ There are multiple knowledge systems and information sources—including indigenous, traditional ecological, and scientific knowledge—that are used to inform the management and governance of small-scale fisheries. Further, limitations in accessible, quantitative data are regularly conflated with a ‘lack of knowledge about how to manage the fishery,’ which inadvertently undervalues local expert fisherfolk and community knowledge. To overcome management challenges, nation-states should undertake the (obvious) functions that they are often not doing—for example, excluding industrial fishers from small-scale fishery areas, and enforcing existing regulations—and which require no additional data.
- ✗ The problems and challenges in small-scale fisheries are rooted in a lack of management and conservation
- ✓ Fishing communities often face a range of challenges, which can co-exist with or be reinforced by issues of social and economic marginalization, and remoteness, such as poor access to education, healthcare, housing, sanitation, and health services. In addition, strong efforts to manage resources by fishing communities can be undermined by, for example, policies that support exploitation elsewhere of migratory stock, a failure to enable local efforts at a larger scale, or the failure of co-management partners to do their part.
- ✗ Small-scale fisheries are a major contributor to illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing
- ✓ Many small-scale fisheries may not be regulated through formal governance arrangements such as laws implemented by the government. Further, small-scale fisheries landings and activities are often not included in monitoring efforts, data, and reporting. However, efforts to eradicate IUU—if they are not differentiating between illegal and illegitimate fishing activities, and informal small-scale fisheries—can inadvertently frame small-scale fisheries as a criminal activity.⁵



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- ✗ Small-scale fisheries are too hard to manage because they're diverse, dynamic, and spread out
- ✓ Managing human relationships with natural resources is inherently difficult. To account for diversity, dynamism and geographic scope, many global, regional, and national policies recognize that, in many contexts, small-scale fisheries are best managed through co-management. The cost of not safeguarding small-scale fisheries may be much higher than the investment required to sustain and improve the sector.³
- ✗ Fishers are driving the demise and overexploitation of fisheries
- ✓ In many instances, fisherfolk act as stewards of fisheries and aquatic ecosystems through forms of co-management. Rather than framing and considering fishers as proponents of destruction and resource demise, co-management frameworks present fishers and other resource stakeholders as having agency in improving resource management and the sustainability of harvesting.

In addition, the development of the fisheries sector over the past three to four decades has seen a change in customary practices for the allocation and sharing of resource benefits in small-scale fisheries, which may have been in place for generations. These changes are a result of non-participatory and often centralized fisheries management systems, rapid technology developments, and demographic changes.





Economic growth and sustainable development

✗ Problematic messages

✓ More accurate messages

- ✗ The blue economy should focus on emergent, economic activities to stimulate wealth generation and conservation
- ✓ Small-scale fisheries employ more people than all other economic ocean sectors put together.¹¹ In blue economy discussions, it is important to recognize the role of small-scale fisheries as major contributors to human wellbeing and resource stewardship.
- ✗ Agricultural intensification is the foundation of food system transformations
- ✓ Agriculture has a larger impact and results in greater modification of natural systems than fisheries.¹² Food systems need to be considered holistically to make sure the investment in one system (agriculture) does not come at the cost of another (fisheries).
- ✗ Stopping fishing, and ceasing to eat fish is the solution to combat the decline in the health of oceans and rivers
- ✓ Giving up seafood is not a realistic or viable option for fisherfolk in developing countries who rely on small-scale fisheries for food, nutrition, and livelihoods. Instead, supporting healthy coastal and inland ecosystems can be achieved by pushing for legislative change and improving co-management of aquatic resources.
- ✗ Aquaculture produces most fish, and aquaculture is the solution to meet the growing demand for fish
- ✓ In fact, most middle- and low-income countries' capture fisheries provide the main supply of fish and will continue to do so for decades to come.¹³ Aquaculture and fisheries can both operate in sustainable and complementary ways, providing different and diverse supplies of fish. That can be achieved by promoting small-scale aquaculture, particularly the culture of non-fish feed dependent species, and reducing the footprint of intensive shrimp and salmon farms, just as with industrial fisheries. Small-scale fisheries and capture fisheries are essential to the genetic diversity of ecosystems.

03

Good communication practices and examples

“Management of small-scale fisheries that are sustainable both for people and fish stocks is no easy feat. It will require communication between actors with different worldviews, at different organizational levels and in different places. It will require a genuine exchange of ideas and innovation. Most importantly, it will require the input and collaboration of those who will be most affected – the small-scale fishers.”

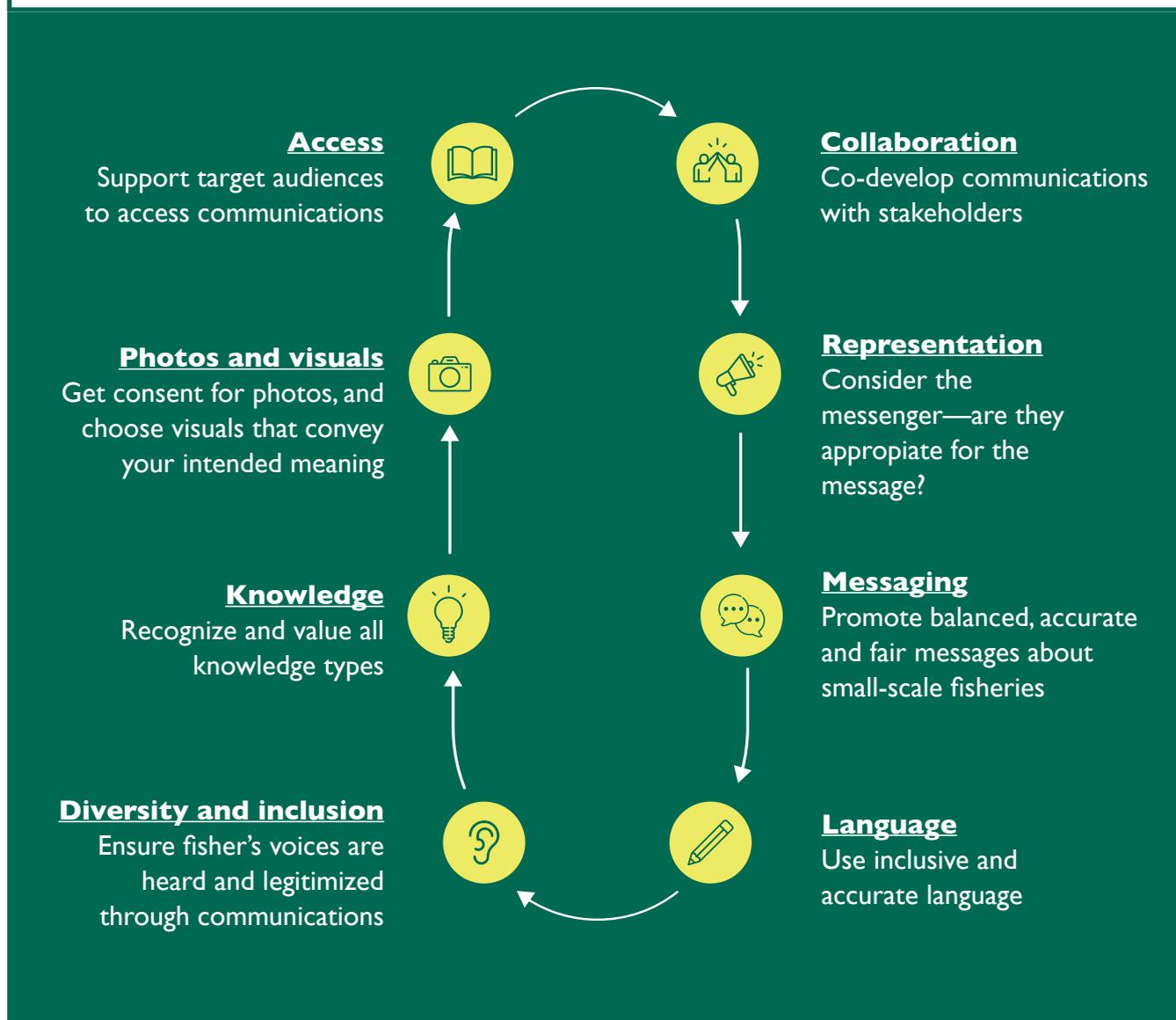
- Singleton et al. 2017¹⁴



The dignity and future of small-scale fisheries is influenced by the way the sector is described and discussed, including, for example, in policy forums, high-level events, community meetings and the media. In turn, this influences the perception that decision-makers have of small-scale fisheries.

This section highlights communication practices to follow or avoid when communicating about small-scale fisheries or related topics (Figure I). These practices apply to diverse types of communication activities and products, so adhere to those that are a ‘best fit’ and directly applicable.

Figure I. Summary of practices to ensure ethical and inclusive communication on small-scale fisheries





Collaboration

Co-develop communications with stakeholders

- Collaborate widely on communication products—with fishers and fishworkers, fishing communities, government, and academia—where appropriate. This helps to build trust.
- When co-developing communications, provide different channels and allow sufficient time appropriate to stakeholders' needs and capacities to support their full participation. For example, a communication may need to be translated into a local language before some stakeholders can provide feedback.

✓ Positive examples

Co-producing content:

[Wawata Topu](#) (Mermaids of Timor-Leste) is a 2013 award-winning documentary filmed by David Palazón and funded by the Pacific Community that shines a light on the women fishers of Adara village. During the filming, the women were directly involved in discussing and negotiating the themes to appear in the 33-minute film. The first screening of the film was attended by Adara community members along with others, reinforcing the value of the women's life narratives.¹⁵

Owning their stories:

On Our Radar, a social impact communication agency, trained and worked with 14 women fish processors and traders from seven African countries to use mobile phone techniques to record and capture the impacts of COVID-19 on fishing communities. The [work](#) has surfaced genuine impacts and community-led solutions.¹⁶



Representation

Consider the messenger—are they correct and appropriate for the message?

- ▶▶ Understand and be clear about who you represent. For example, do not pretend or imply to be speaking on behalf of small-scale fisheries unless that is clearly the case.
- ▶▶ Strive for legitimate voices and messengers. For instance, consider including the voices of fisherfolk, rather than an external entity who are not in the small-scale fisheries sector.
- ▶▶ Consider whose voices are less likely to be heard but may need a platform for their voice. For instance, when planning an event agenda, ensure diverse representation among speakers in relation to sexes, geographies, affiliations, and ages.

✓ Positive examples

Improving representation:

In 2012, the North Atlantic Seafood Forum, the largest seafood professionals' event in the world, had only [6 percent](#) of women as speakers in their debates. The forum has focused on improving women representation, which grew to 21 percent in 2018, and has committed to achieving 40 percent of female speakers by 2025.

Grassroots storytelling:

The [Kokoly documentary](#) by Blue Ventures, released in 2019, gives a snapshot into the life of a Vezo fisherwoman from southwest Madagascar. The film promotes [Madame Kokoly](#) and her village's profound knowledge of the sea and its resources, while providing insights into Kokoly's daily experiences and struggles.





Messaging

Promote balanced, accurate and fair messages about small-scale fisheries

- ≈ Do not assume your audience knows everything about small-scale fisheries. Ensure your communication emphasizes the role, importance, opportunities, and challenges small-scale fisheries. Acknowledge the positive and negative aspects.
- ≈ Emphasize equally the non-economic and economic dimensions of small-scale fisheries. For example, highlight how small-scale fisheries provide vital food, nutrition, livelihoods, culture, and employment.
- ≈ When dealing with crises and critique, focus more on solutions. Positive messages, instead of ‘doom and gloom’ messages, are more effective at sharing information and driving action.¹⁷
- ≈ When using science in your communication, use robust evidence to inform your content. Scientific research on small-scale fisheries that has not been peer-reviewed or replicated should not be the primary basis of communication materials.
- ≈ Avoid bias toward one small-scale fisheries group. For example, in discussions on oceans and aquatic resources, include marginal groups such as inland fisheries.
- ≈ Present women as equal contributors in terms of their roles, skills and knowledge. Talk about ‘women and men in small-scale fisheries’—in that order—to bring women to the forefront. Use sex-disaggregated data and information, where available, to allow for an improved understanding and visibility of gender roles in small-scale fisheries.

✓ Positive examples

Balanced journalism:

In a 2018 MongaBay article,¹⁸ journalist Shreya Dasgupta used a critical eye to consider the good and bad sides of MPAs, including how they relate to benefits for small-scale fisheries. She reviewed 42 scientific studies and case reports and spoke with seven experts, resulting in balanced reporting.



Language

Use inclusive and accurate language

- Choose words that reflect exactly what you mean. For example, use broad phrases like ‘inland and coastal waters’ to capture all small-scale fisheries explicitly, instead of ‘oceans’ that implies only marine fisheries.
- Use gender-inclusive and/or neutral terms. For example, talk about ‘fisherfolk’ or ‘fishers and fishworkers’. Avoid using just ‘fishers’, as these are often men, resulting in women, typically the fishworkers, being overlooked.
- Consider how specific words and phrases are understood in different languages, contexts, and cultures. Take care that language does not create conflict or divisions between fisherfolk and other groups.

✓ Positive examples

Making it clear:

In 2018, the NGO CoopeSoliDar R.L. developed a briefing document ([*Proyecto de Ley para el sector de pesca de pesca artesanal de pequeña escala*](#)) to give small-scale fishers and fishworkers in Costa Rica simple and clear information about a draft bill that aimed to support them. The document, written in Spanish and featuring several simple graphics, helped fishers and fishworkers read the draft bill and understand its main content, so that they could give their opinion and say whether they supported it or thought it needed important changes.





Diversity and inclusion

Ensure fishers' and fishworkers' voices are heard and legitimized through communications

- Provide platforms for underrepresented yet critical voices, including fishers, fishworkers, and other local stakeholders. This includes, for example, inviting fisherfolk to attend events and supporting them to speak up and be heard, and including their voices in media articles and stories.
- Consider representation and inclusion by reflecting on the diverse and nuanced ways that people hold power. For example, consider how a fishworker from a developed country will be viewed compared to a fishworker from a rural area of a developing country.
- Establish appropriate processes or use existing platforms and networks to gather and feed back information and communication to fishing communities and their organizations.

✓ Positive examples

Inclusive discussions:

In 2021, WorldFish and SwedBio supported the SSF-GSF Advisory Group to host a series of four webinars to discuss implementing the SSF Guidelines (specifically, an introduction, the human rights-based approach, gender and climate change). The success of the webinars, which were delivered by civil society and attended by environmental NGO representatives and members of the regional advisory groups, hinged on close collaboration with the advisory group, the speakers and attendees. The platform was provided for the advisory group to choose the topics and discussion points.





Knowledge

Recognize and value all knowledge types

- ≈ Recognize that scientific knowledge is not the only type of knowledge relevant to the science-policy nexus. There are other types of knowledge—local, indigenous, social, political, moral, religious, institutional, and experiential knowledge—that are also valid, exchanged and co-created.
- ≈ Combine knowledge types in some cases. Approach scientific knowledge and indigenous knowledge not as mutually exclusive competing ideas but as complementary.
- ≈ Ensure free, prior, and informed consent on the sharing of indigenous and other local knowledge.¹⁹
- ≈ Acknowledge and give credit to fisherfolk and their organizations when you use their information and knowledge.

✓ Positive examples

Giving credit:

The front cover of the [Small-Scale Fishing in Central American Indigenous People: Governance, Tenure and Sustainable Management of Marine Resources](#) report includes the logos and names of contributing fishing organizations and partners from local communities and indigenous peoples, recognizing their vital inputs to the research.

Local knowledge:

CoopeSoliDar R.L produced a [book](#) reflecting an oral story about the CoopeTárcoles R.L SSF fishing cooperative in the Central Pacific of Costa Rica. The book was built on the drawings of fishers' sons and daughters, who had listened to stories about how fishing had started in that cooperative. The book, containing detailed drawings of fish and boats, ensures the story is not lost.



Photos and visuals

Follow the same guidelines for photos and visuals as for written mediums

- Feature women as often as men, feature inland fisheries as much as coastal fisheries, and be representative of the entire small-scale fisheries value chain, spanning pre- to post-harvest activities.
- Ensure fisherfolk and other audiences can see themselves reflected in the photos. Pay attention to elements like skin color and other cues that describe context.
- Choose photos and visual representations that convey the meaning you intend. For instance, when talking about industrial fisheries, only use photos that reflect industrial fisheries.

Only use photos or footage for which you have permission

- Obtain explicit verbal or written consent from people to take and use their photos. You must clearly explain, via a translator if necessary, how you will use the photos.
- Obtain permission from the photographer and/or the copyright holder before using a photo. Include the photographer's name with the photo.

✓ Positive examples

Authentic stories:

The [Caribbean fisherfolk lives and livelihood interactions webinar](#) on 3 June 2021, hosted by the Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies in Barbados, featured videos of fishers from the region showing their daily lives. The videos were recorded and produced by the fisherfolk on their own devices, ensuring authentic reflections.

Diverse footage:

The [Responsible marine fishing areas in Tarcoles, Costa Rica video](#) produced by Consorcio Porlamar features speakers all from the fishing community (both women and men) and provides sufficient context to depict an accurate picture of the situation.



Access

Consider and make efforts to support target audiences, including local communities, to access communications

- Communications should be translated into the local languages and dialects of target audiences, as much as possible. For example, engage interpreters to support virtual events, ensuring as many stakeholders can participate as possible.
- Make information accessible in a format that is readily understandable by audiences and communities. For example, using art is a powerful way to communicate with communities by including elements such as music, culture, and lots of colors.
- Consider how technological challenges may impact your ability to communicate fully and take steps to address these. For example, when holding video calls, consider supporting participants (e.g. financially) who do not have access to a reliable internet connection.
- Accept that your activities and projects in small-scale fisheries are subject to public scrutiny and accountability through criticism and feedback by fishers, fishworkers, and organizations representing them.

✓ Positive examples

Expanding reach:

Many civil society organizations have prepared [local language versions](#) of the SSF Guidelines, extending its reach and engagement with the communities that depend on small-scale fisheries. In addition, the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers has created a [simplified version of the SSF Guidelines](#) in many languages, thereby ensuring the content and principles are accessible to the widest possible audiences.

Available for all:

The [World Forum of Fisher Peoples](#) (WFFP) has 29 member organizations from over 23 countries, representing over 10 million small-scale fishers and fishworkers. For its member meetings, the WFFP has interpretation available in up to 10 languages, enabling many members to attend, participate and contribute to important discussions.

04

Indicators of success

“ Journalists and researchers need to switch to being bridge builders, connectors and networkers that use their connections to amplify fisherfolks’ voices, ensuring they get heard and seen by the audiences that matter. And impacts need to be fed back to communities so they can stay in control of the narratives. ”

- Libby Drew, Founder, On Our Radar²⁰



Individuals and organizations will know that they are communicating successfully about small-scale fisheries if their efforts contribute to positive impacts for fisherfolk spanning local to global scales.

Success indicators

- ✓ **Voice:** A strong voice has been developed around accurate, unified messages that have fishers' and fishworkers' voices at its core. Spaces and platforms have been made for diverse voices, and fishers and fishworkers are represented in policy and decision-making processes.
- ✓ **Narratives:** Powerful, misleading, or wrong discourses and implicit assumptions have been challenged and pushed back against by using robust knowledge and evidence.
- ✓ **Awareness:** There has been strong engagement with policy and decision-makers beyond the fisheries sector to enhance the understanding of the diverse contributions of small-scale fisheries. Small-scale fisheries are valued for their diverse contributions to social, economic, and environmental sustainability.
- ✓ **Capacity:** The capacities of legitimate small-scale fisheries messengers or advocates of the SSF Guidelines have been developed, and those people feel empowered to raise their voice, be heard and experience agency in decision-making processes.
- ✓ **Collaboration:** Communication messages, products, platforms, and opportunities are being co-designed and co-presented with those to which the issue pertains, and communications are perceived as legitimate by small-scale fisheries actors themselves.
- ✓ **Knowledge:** Communications incorporate diverse types of knowledge—including indigenous, traditional ecological, and scientific knowledge—and value local efforts.

Annexes

“ New small-scale fisheries narratives are needed to replace or substantiate the existing narratives so we can tell the small-scale fisheries story in a stronger, powerful and more accurate way.”

- Dr. Prateep Nayak, Project Director, V2V Global Partnership, University of Waterloo²⁰





Annex I

Resources used to develop the SSF communications guide

Some of this guide's content has been drawn from publications and meeting proceedings, where fishers and fisher organizations have participated and expressed their views about communications, including the need for a better representation of small-scale fisheries actors, livelihoods, and values.

These include:

- Statements of and advocacy by the [World Forum of Fisher Peoples](#), [World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fishworkers](#) and the [IPC Working Group on Fisheries](#)
- Proceedings from the [Small-Scale Fisheries Open House event](#) (1-8 June 2021) hosted by the Too Big To Ignore global research network
- [Ethical and inclusive communication on small-scale fisheries webinar](#) (19 May 2021) hosted by the Society for Marine Conservation Section
- IUCN Guidelines for gathering of fishers' knowledge for policy development and applied use²¹
- International Symposium on Fisheries Sustainability: Strengthening the Science-Policy Nexus conference (18–21 November 2019) organized by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)³
- New positive narratives on small-scale fisheries webinar (8 June 2021) organized by WorldFish and partners²⁰
- Towards Resilient and Equitable Small-Scale Fisheries meeting (3–5 September 2019) organized by WorldFish in partnership with FAO and the Oak Foundation²²
- [Social contract](#) developed and updated by the Locally-Managed Marine Area (LMMA) Network International over 20 years.



Annex 2

Communication principles in the SSF Guidelines

Within the SSF Guidelines, sections 11 (information, research, and communication) and 12 (capacity development) include explicit principles about communication. These principles provide the basis for this guide and are at the heart of ethical and inclusive communication about small-scale fisheries.

11.1 States should establish systems of collecting fisheries data, including bioecological, social, cultural, and economic data relevant for decision-making on sustainable management of small-scale fisheries with a view to ensuring sustainability of ecosystems, including fish stocks, in a transparent manner. Efforts should be made to also produce gender-disaggregated data in official statistics, as well as **data allowing for an improved understanding and visibility of the importance of small-scale fisheries and its different components, including socioeconomic aspects.**

11.2 All stakeholders and small-scale fisheries communities should **recognize the importance of communication and information**, which are necessary for effective decision-making.

11.3 States should endeavour to prevent corruption, particularly through increasing transparency, holding decision-makers accountable, and ensuring that impartial decisions are delivered promptly and through **appropriate participation and communication with small-scale fishing communities.**

11.4 All parties should **recognize small-scale fishing communities as holders, providers, and receivers of knowledge.** It is particularly important to **understand the need for access to appropriate information by small-scale fishing communities and their organizations** in order to help them cope with existing problems and empower them to improve their livelihoods. These information requirements depend on current issues facing communities and concern the biological, legal, economic, social, and cultural aspects of fisheries and livelihoods.

11.5 States should ensure that the **information necessary for responsible small-scale fisheries and sustainable development is available**, including on illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. It should relate to, inter alia, disaster risks, climate change, livelihoods, and food security with particular attention to the situation of vulnerable and marginalized groups. Information systems with low data requirements should be developed for data-poor situations.

11.6 All parties should **ensure that the knowledge, culture, traditions, and practices of small-scale fishing communities, including indigenous peoples, are recognized** and, as appropriate, supported, and that they inform responsible local governance and sustainable development processes. **The specific knowledge of women fishers and fish workers must be recognized and supported.** States should investigate and document traditional fisheries knowledge and technologies in order to assess their application to sustainable fisheries conservation, management and development.



11.7 States and other relevant parties should provide support to small-scale fishing communities, in particular to indigenous peoples, women and those that rely on fishing for subsistence, including, as appropriate, the technical and financial assistance to organize, maintain, exchange and improve traditional knowledge of aquatic living resources and fishing techniques, and upgrade knowledge on aquatic ecosystems.

11.8 All parties should promote the availability, flow, and exchange of information, including on aquatic transboundary resources, through the establishment or use of appropriate existing platforms and networks at community, national, subregional and regional level, including both horizontal and vertical two-way information flows. Taking into account the social and cultural dimensions, appropriate approaches, tools and media should be used for communication with and capacity development for small-scale fishing communities.

11.9 States and other parties should, to the extent possible, ensure that funds are available for small-scale fisheries research, and collaborative and participatory data collection, analyses and research should be encouraged. States and other parties should endeavour to integrate this research knowledge into their decision-making processes. Research organizations and institutions should support capacity development to allow small-scale fishing communities to participate in research and in the utilization of research findings. Research priorities should be agreed upon through a consultative process focusing on the role of small-scale fisheries in sustainable resource utilization, food security and nutrition, poverty eradication, and equitable development, including also DRM and CCA considerations.

11.10 States and other relevant parties should promote research into the conditions of work, including those of migrant fishers and fish workers, and inter alia health, education, decision-making, in the context of gender relations, in order to inform strategies for ensuring equitable benefits for men and women in fisheries. Efforts to mainstream gender should include the use of gender analysis in the design phase of policies, programmes and projects for small-scale fisheries in order to design gender-sensitive interventions. Gender-sensitive indicators should be used to monitor and address gender inequalities and to capture how interventions have contributed towards social change.

11.11 Recognizing the role of small-scale fisheries in seafood production, States and other parties should promote the consumption of fish and fishery products within consumer education programmes in order to increase awareness of the nutritional benefits of eating fish and impart knowledge on how to assess fish and fishery product quality.

12.1 States and other parties should enhance the capacity of small-scale fishing communities in order to enable them to participate in decision-making processes. To this effect, it should be ensured that the range and diversity of the small-scale fisheries subsector along the entire



value chain is appropriately represented through the creation of legitimate, democratic and representative structures. Specific attention should be paid to the need to work towards the equitable participation of women in such structures. Where appropriate and necessary, separate spaces and mechanisms should be provided to enable women to organize autonomously at various levels on issues of particular relevance to them.

12.2 States and other stakeholders should provide capacity building, for example through development programmes, to allow small-scale fisheries to benefit from market opportunities.

12.3 All parties should recognize that **capacity development should build on existing knowledge and skills and be a two-way process of knowledge transfer**, providing for flexible and suitable learning pathways to meet the needs of individuals, including both men and women and vulnerable and marginalized groups. Moreover, capacity development should include building the resilience and adaptive capacity of small-scale fishing communities in relation to DRM and CCA.

12.4 Government authorities and agencies at all levels should work to develop knowledge and skills to support sustainable small-scale fisheries development and successful co-management arrangements, as appropriate. Particular attention should be given to decentralized and local government structures directly involved in governance and development processes together with small-scale fishing communities, including the area of research.





Annex 3

Communication principles in international agreements

In addition to the SSF Guidelines, ethical and inclusive communications are fundamental to and emphasized in a range of international agreements related to human rights, tenure rights, food security, rights to work and other foundations of human and environmental wellbeing:

- [2021 COFI Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture](#): The use of the “best available scientific information” is recommended to inform “effective time and area-based management tools” to ensure “healthy and productive ecosystems.”
- [Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems](#): Principle 7 includes: “Responsible investment in agriculture and food systems respects cultural heritage and traditional knowledge, and supports diversity, including genetic diversity, and innovation by: (i) Respecting cultural heritage sites and systems, including traditional knowledge, skills, and practices; and recognizing the role of indigenous peoples and local communities in agriculture and food systems.”
- [Sustainable Development Goals](#): Target 17.16 emphasizes the need for mobilizing and sharing knowledge: “Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, in particular developing countries.”
- [The Rome Declaration: Ten Steps to Responsible Inland Fisheries](#): Step 5 (improve communication among freshwater users) states, “Building from the “Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines” and other relevant instruments, use appropriate and accessible communication channels to disseminate information about inland fish, fishers and fisheries to raise awareness of inland fisheries’ values and issues, to alter human behavior, and influence relevant policy and management.”
- [UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#): Article 15 states, “Indigenous peoples have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information.”
- [UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas](#): Article 11 says, “States shall take appropriate measures to ensure that peasants and other people working in rural areas have access to relevant, transparent, timely and adequate information in a language and form and through means adequate to their cultural methods so as to promote their empowerment and to ensure their effective participation in decision-making in matters that may affect their lives, land and livelihoods.”



- Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition: Point 3.5.2 calls on stakeholders to “use science and evidence-based as well as cultural, traditional and ancestral knowledge resources to promote and support education and knowledge of healthy diets, sustainable food systems, nutrition..., taking into consideration cultural and social norms and adapting to different audiences and contexts, including those of indigenous peoples with their voluntary consent on the sharing of their own knowledge as well as participating in broader knowledge and education.”
- Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (Tenure Guidelines): Section 26.5 states, “All parties, including civil society organizations and the private sector, are encouraged to use collaborative efforts to promote and implement these Guidelines in accordance with national priorities and contexts. All parties are encouraged to disseminate information on responsible tenure governance in order to improve practices.”





Annex 4

Legitimate sources of information and representation

These reports, websites and organizations hold current information on small-scale fisheries and are a useful starting point to check for the latest data, statistics and perspectives associated with small-scale fisheries:

Civil society organizations, social movements, and networks

- ≈ [CoopeSoliDar R.L](#)
- ≈ [Confederation of Artisanal Fisheries Organisations \(CAOPA\)](#)
- ≈ [ICCA Consortium](#)
- ≈ [International Collective in Support of Fishworkers](#)
- ≈ [International Indian Treaty Council](#)
- ≈ [IPC Working Group on Fisheries](#)
- ≈ [Locally-Managed Marine Area \(LMMA\) Network International](#)
- ≈ [World Forum of Fisher Peoples](#)
- ≈ [World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers](#)

Documents and reports

- ≈ [Blue Food Assessment](#)
- ≈ [Illuminating Hidden Harvests: The contributions of small-scale fisheries to sustainable development report](#) by FAO, Duke University and WorldFish (forthcoming, 2022)
- ≈ [State of the World's Fisheries and Aquaculture report](#), released bi-yearly by FAO
- ≈ [Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication](#)



Websites and webpages

- ≈ [International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture](#)
- ≈ [Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines webpage](#) on the FAO website
- ≈ [Small-Scale Fisheries Resource and Collaboration Hub](#)

Research organizations, networks and initiatives

- ≈ [Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries](#)
- ≈ [Sea Around Us initiative](#)
- ≈ [Too Big To Ignore research network](#)
- ≈ [Vulnerability to Viability \(V2V\)](#)
- ≈ [WorldFish](#)

Communication resources

- ≈ [Covering the seas:An issue guide written by Paul Greenberg](#)
- ≈ [Guidelines for an inclusive gender approach in communication products](#)
- ≈ [The need for a code of professional ethics for marine conservation communicators](#)
- ≈ [Tips for journalists covering oceans and fisheries](#) (2014) by Earth Journalism Network





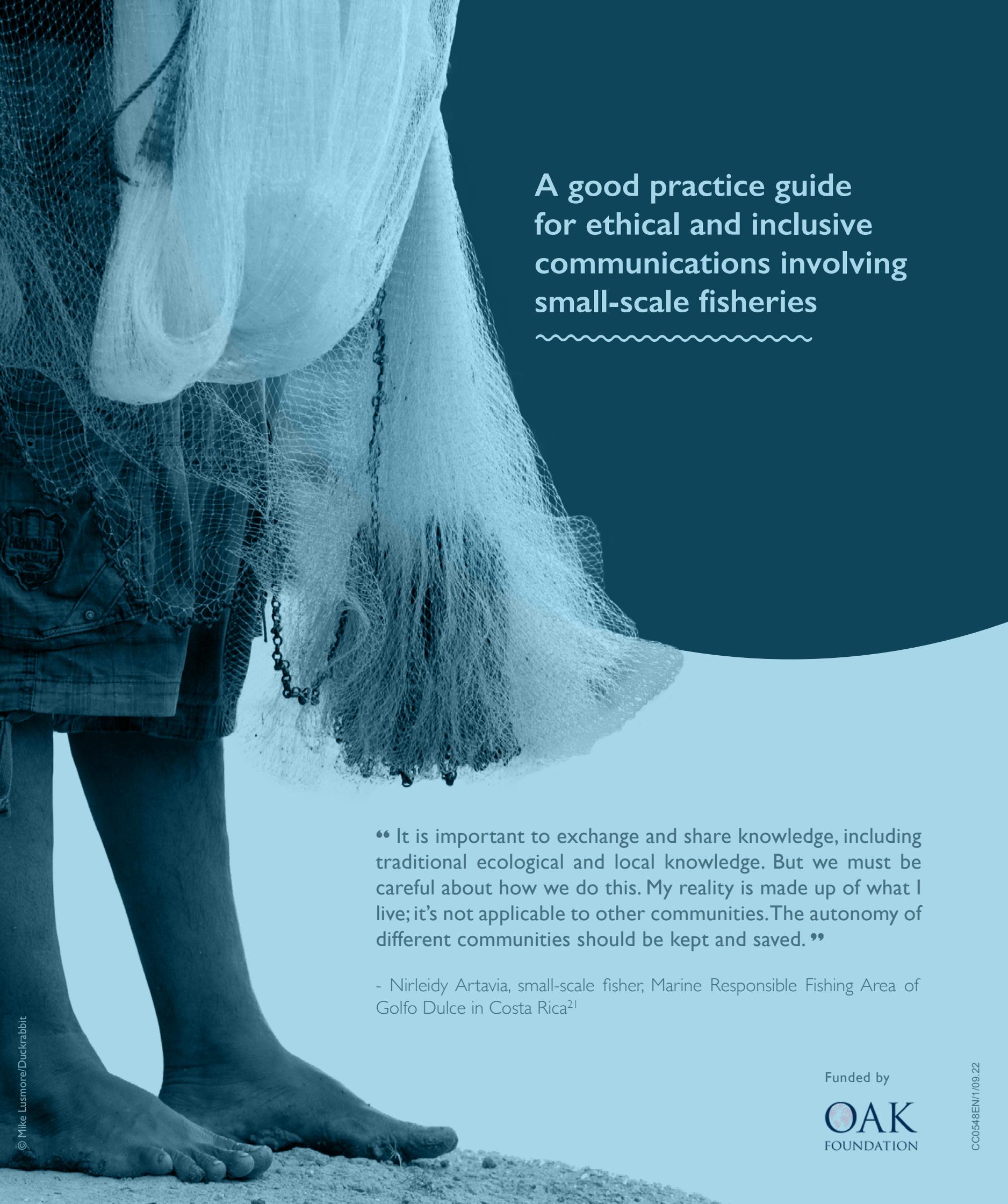
Annex 5

Notes

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A good practice guide for ethical and inclusive communications involving small-scale fisheries

“ It is important to exchange and share knowledge, including traditional ecological and local knowledge. But we must be careful about how we do this. My reality is made up of what I live; it’s not applicable to other communities. The autonomy of different communities should be kept and saved. ”

- Nirleidy Artavia, small-scale fisher, Marine Responsible Fishing Area of Golfo Dulce in Costa Rica²¹

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