



Implement the letter and spirit of the International Small-scale Fisheries guidelines – no to distorting their interpretation!

WFFP statement on World Fisheries Day 21.11.2016

In the struggle for securing the human rights of fisher peoples, WFFP commits to taking ownership (with national governments) of the International Small-scale Fisheries guidelines and ensuring a genuine interpretation of them. The small-scale fisherfolk of the world organised under WFFP played a prominent role in the development of the Small-scale Fisheries guidelines and will play an equally prominent role in their implementation.

On this day, 19 years ago, the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) was founded by a number of mass-based small-scale fisher people organisations from all over the world. WFFP was formed to fight for the human rights of the millions of fisher people whose livelihoods were threatened or lost due to what today is known as Ocean, Land and Water Grabbing. This fight gave effect to many years of struggle to develop the International Small-scale Fisheries guidelines.

“One of our greatest victories is the endorsement of the International Small-scale Fisheries Guidelines by the Committee on Fisheries [COFI] of the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation [FAO] in 2014. This was followed up by another key victory in July, when the thirty-second session of the COFI unanimously adopted the Global Strategic Framework (GSF) to give effect to the implementation of the Small-scale fishery guidelines” says Naseegh Jaffer, the General Secretary of the WFFP.

Today, on World Fisheries Day, all members of the WFFP from over thirty countries take action to celebrate these victories. On this special day, our members will also advance the struggle against Ocean, Land and Water Grabbing.

According to an Indigenous leader of the WFFP, Sherry Pictou of Bear River First Nation in Canada, a real and new threat to the worlds small-scale fisher peoples is the attempts by neo-liberal actors to distort the spirit and meaning of the Small-scale Fisheries guidelines: “When we developed the International guidelines, transnational corporations did not show any commitment towards our Human Rights, but now we are suddenly witnessing that some of the most powerful transnationals have organised themselves under what is called Sustainable Fisheries Partnership. Through this group, they are now engaging in the implementation of the guidelines in an attempt to repackage the letters and spirit of the guidelines. In this way, transnationals and their allies are diluting the transformative potential of our guidelines away from the pursuit of social justice towards their profit-oriented model”

[In a new new publication released on this World Fisheries Day](#), it is explained how transnational corporations and allied NGOs are attempting to blend their market oriented approach with the Human Rights Based approach of the Small-scale fisheries guidelines. But these approaches are not compatible, argues one of the founding members of the WFFP, Muhammad Ali Shah of the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum. “we perceive this as an attempt by these groups to wash their dirty hands in our clean waters so that they can maintain their good consumer images and, what is more devastating, to continue making more profits through fictionalization of our nature. It amounts to nothing more than Ocean Grabbing”.

WFFP increasingly witness transnational corporations working hand in hand with international environmental NGO in an attempt to penetrate decision-making platforms. In order to counter these neo-liberal attacks, WFFP stays committed to the protect and promote the Human Rights Based Approach to fisheries and to bring the closely connected principles of Food Sovereignty and Agroecology to the fore.

“Time has come for us fisher peoples’ to stand up and resist these repeated attempts by outside organisations and corporations to come into our communities and take what belong to us, including our small-scale fisheries guidelines. We will celebrate this special day in remembrance of our late leaders who always stood up to protect our Food Sovereignty. As a special contribution to this day, we share with you our [new publication on the Human Rights Based approach and the implementation of the Small-scale fishery guidelines](#). This report will empower our communities and enable them to ensure a genuine interpretation of our International Small-scale Fisheries guidelines.” - Naseegh Jaffer