



Transparency and the Small-Scale Fisheries Sector in Africa Support for the Fisheries Transparency Initiative

The Fisheries Transparency Initiative was launched in 2017. The President of CAOPA is serving on the International Board of FiTI, and CAOPA has played an active role in the development of the FiTI Standard.

Why FiTI has our support

CAOPA promotes access to information, participation in decision making, and access to justice, as interrelated rights that are needed to achieve sustainable and equitable fisheries. But in many countries where small-scale fisheries form a vital sector for coastal communities and national food security, these rights are denied.

The design of the FiTI means implementing countries will provide information that is both **accessible** and **credible**. Accessibility of information is important for small-scale fishing communities, who can find it extremely difficult to access otherwise public information. Equally, credibility of information is paramount, so people know that the information available has been independently verified and is up to date. Accessibility and credibility can only be achieved with the participation of different stakeholders, which is why CAOPA supports the multi-stakeholder aspect of the FiTI.

How can FiTI help the small-scale fishing sector?

Specifically, there are several ways that the FiTI can help the small-scale sector:

1]. Achieving sustainable fishing:

Throughout the world, the well-being of the small-scale fisheries sector is under threat due to decreasing fish stocks and overfishing. This state of affairs is partly driven by lack of credible data in the public domain on the status of fish stocks, as well as information on catches and discards. Everyone should have access to this information, and where there are gaps in information, this should be made clear by relevant authorities, and efforts devised to overcome it.

2]. Accountability on access agreements and licensing for industrial fishing:

The FiTI obliges implementing countries to publish information on fisheries access agreements, including disclosing any studies on the social, economic and environmental impacts of these agreements. Today, only the EU provide this type of information. There are large numbers of access agreements that remain confidential, although the terms of these agreements can have a substantial impact on small-scale fisheries and national food security. In fact, in many countries, basic information on how many industrial vessels are licensed, what quantities of fish they are allowed to catch and how much they pay, is kept confidential or obscured from the public. Small-Scale fishers have campaigned for years for this information to be made public.

3]. Confronting illegal fishing and related corruption

There is an international agreement on the need to confront IUU fishing. Often, IUU fishing has a disproportionate impact on coastal communities and the small-scale sector. However, countries that are committed to confronting these issues must recognise that secrecy and confidentiality in fisheries is the ideal environment for crime. In many countries, not only are lists of licensed vessels kept confidential, but there is also a lack of information on financial flows, prosecutions and resources used for law enforcement.

4.] Improve understanding of the social and economic contribution of the small-scale sector:

A major challenge facing the small-scale sector is lack of reliable information on its contribution to livelihoods and food security. Often credible information on the small-scale sector is simply not being collated. The FiTI requires governments to collate and publish various information on the small-scale fishing sector, including information on their social, economic and food security contributions. If this information is not available, then countries have to agree on a time frame for this information to be collated and publicised. This would be a major step forward in the implementation of the FAO's Guidelines on Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication.

5.] Raise awareness on the progress being made to improve labour standards in the fisheries sector.

Parts of the fishing sector continue to exist with dreadful labour standards, reaching the point of slave like treatment of people and children belonging to fishing communities. It is imperative that governments publish information on labour standards in the fisheries sector and make clear their efforts and commitments to abolish slavery and human trafficking, which in turn can be used to further advocate for the need to implement ILO Work in Fishing Convention.

6.] Contribute to reforming government subsidies to the fisheries sector

It is well known that subsidies are a major contribution to unsustainable and unfair fisheries. Indeed, while the small-scale sector tends to receive far less in government support in comparison to large scale fisheries, the negative impact of subsidies disproportionately affects poorer people and poorer countries. There has been a failure by many fishing nations to adhere to international calls for transparency in subsidies, including through the WTO. The FiTI represents one tool to demonstrate how countries are supporting improvements, and it will also increase public knowledge that can feed into national debates on how government transfers to the sector align with national priorities on the environment, employment and food security.

7.] Improve aid effectiveness

The fisheries sector in developing countries receives significant support through official development assistance. Much of this claim to support poverty reduction and food security, and small-scale fishing communities are often considered the intended benefactors. But small-scale fishing communities are too often unaware of these aid projects, they are often not consulted in the design and implementation, and they rarely have means to hold those responsible for these efforts accountable. Small-Scale fishing organisations therefore want full disclosure of information, as well as improved means of participation and consultation.

For more information

CAOPA Secretariat
caopa.peche@gmail.com