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**Submission by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)**

**to the call for inputs on “Access to information on climate change and human rights” from Special Rapporteur on promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change**

Climate change may cause the most harm to those who have contributed the least to the climate crisis, such as small-scale fishing and fish farming communities, particularly those living in low-income countries and islands. The impact of climate change on human rights is profound, affecting people’s right to food, access to drinking water, education, health, and housing. This is bringing disproportionate consequences to individuals, groups, and people who are in vulnerable situations such as women, children, older persons, indigenous peoples, minorities, migrants, and the poor.

The FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines),[[1]](#footnote-2) the 2021 FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture,[[2]](#footnote-3) and the Paris Agreement recognize the importance of gender equality, equity and human rights. Climate change adaptation in the fisheries and aquaculture sector must integrate gender equality, equity and human rights considerations in both processes and outcomes. Key process considerations include transparency, participation, access to justice, and non-discrimination. Key outcome considerations include the right to life and supporting the rights to food, housing, water, and livelihoods. The adaptation planning process needs to be participatory and inclusive, thus engaging and empowering vulnerable communities, including small-scale fishers and fish farmers, and taking into account the different needs and vulnerabilities of women and men. Countries should assess the vulnerabilities of the fisheries and aquaculture sector and act in line with gender equality, equity and human rights considerations. This requires countries to be proactive, taking action in preparation for future events, whether extreme or slow onset, ensuring access to resilient infrastructure and public services.

To support the implementation of human rights-based approaches to climate change, FAO has developed a guidance document on the integration of human rights standards and laws into climate action and disaster risk reduction in small-scale fisheries (SSF).[[3]](#footnote-4) The right to access information is a critical aspect of this guidance. For example, fishing communities should have access to information about the likelihood of disasters and early warnings about imminent dangerous events. They should have access to information used or produced during planning, emergency response, and reconstruction. Where a State has information, for example as to the likelihood or imminent risk of extreme events that pose a risk to life, health, or security to SSF communities or fishers, the State should provide that information to potentially affected communities. When implementing Chapter 9 of the SSF Guidelines, States typically will have to provide information on the specific, as well as general risks, faced by SSF communities. Additionally, pursuant to the SSF Guidelines’ principles of consultation and participation, small-scale fishing communities, including Indigenous Peoples, should be granted active, free, effective, meaningful and informed participation in the whole relevant decision-making process (paragraph 3.1(6), SSF Guidelines).

Overall, the right to information should cover information and data on climate change impacts, risks, and vulnerabilities in relation to the aquatic food sector, early warning information, available climate change adaptation and mitigation options that can be tailored to local contexts, as well as loss and damage experienced by fishers and fish farmers due to climate-related events. It should also encompass practical entry points for aquatic food stakeholders to engage with national and international climate policymaking processes. Such information should be provided in applicable languages, accessible to all, and widely publicized, following a rules-based approach (paragraph 3.1(7), SSF Guidelines).

FAO has been actively compiling and disseminating climate change information in relation to the aquatic food sector. To support evidence-based adaptation and mitigation, FAO has conducted a comprehensive review on disaggregated impacts of climate change on fisheries and aquaculture, based on model projections, data analyses, and expert assessments.[[4]](#footnote-5) A upcoming report will also contain projections of exploitable fish biomass under different climate change and socioeconomic scenarios. Additionally, FAO guidance on renewable energy interventions along the small-scale fish value chains is available.[[5]](#footnote-6)

However, as revealed in the Illuminating Hidden Harvest (IHH) report, even though small-scale fisheries are very vulnerable to climate change, a comprehensive synthesis of the related impacts, challenges, opportunities and good practices for adaptation and mitigation in small-scale fisheries is lacking.[[6]](#footnote-7) The remote and dispersed nature of small-scale fishing communities, combined with a lack of resources and inadequate infrastructure for data collection and monitoring, makes this task particularly difficult. This is especially true when it comes to sex-disaggregated data, therefore hampering opportunities to provide gender-responsive tools and measures against climate change impacts. In addition, complex data and technical language used in reporting can be difficult for rights holders to understand and evaluate. Technical jargon and complex formats can hinder understanding. Also, many documents and data are available only in major languages, not in local languages spoken by small-scale fishers and fish farmers.

There is also a deficit of climate data and information with finer spatial or temporal resolution needed for decision-making in most developing countries. Climate considerations and measures are also largely missing from existing fisheries and aquaculture management policies, approaches, and legislation. States are encouraged to develop policies and plans to address climate change in fisheries in full and effective consultation with fishing communities, including Indigenous Peoples, men and women (paragraph 9.2, SSF Guidelines). Moreover, inadequate data collection and reporting on how climate change specifically impacts women, children, Indigenous Peoples and other vulnerable groups can lead to insufficient policy and legal responses that fail to address their unique vulnerabilities.

To address the challenges mentioned above, a stocktaking exercise to compile facts, recommendations and good practices is underway. This exercise aims to provide an evidence base to support SSF stakeholders, enable them to effectively participate in climate related processes at national, regional, and global levels. It will help identify major gaps in information, knowledge and guidance, thereby informing the development of an FAO work programme on SSF and climate change. This effort also responds to requests from regional bodies such as the Commission of Small-Scale Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture of Latin America and the Caribbean (COPPESAALC) who recommended to continue assisting countries in the development of climate change vulnerability analysis in fisheries and aquaculture.[[7]](#footnote-8) FAO is also committed to strengthening linkages with countries, other UN organizations and non-State actors, to foster inclusion of aquatic food climate solutions into national and international climate policies and actions. As part of this effort, FAO is developing a guide to empower aquatic food stakeholders with insights into climate negotiations and identify practical entry points.

Further to this, FAO also developed a report[[8]](#footnote-9) and an online learning course[[9]](#footnote-10) to support local leaders and sectoral organizations, policymakers, and others working in coastal communities and with small-scale fisheries with information, practical tools and approaches to better understand and address the interlinked challenges of climate change and poverty. Developed with insights from many perspectives, the material includes not only climate and poverty aspects, but also Indigenous, gender, food security, disaster response, resilience, SIDS and coastal community perspectives, among others, with a series of policy recommendations and tools to improve the design, delivery, and results of synergies and linkages between climate mitigation and adaptation, poverty reduction and food security actions and including an introduction to shock-responsive and adaptive social protection.

Additionally, FAO is also developing SSF-LEX,[[10]](#footnote-11) a policy and legal database dedicated to small-scale fisheries, which provides country profiles with information on the relevant policy and legislation that relate to a range of topics covered by the SSF Guidelines, including climate change measures. SSF-LEX offers detailed information on the legal and policy frameworks governing small-scale fisheries across various countries, providing easy access, for different stakeholders, to crucial legal and policy instruments. In section 7 of the country profiles, users can find information related to “Disaster Risk and Climate Change”. This section includes a brief analysis of the legal and policy instruments addressing the protection of small-scale fishers from disaster risks and climate change and the recognition of their vulnerability in relevant policies and strategies. It also covers provisions in relation to rehabilitation and reconstruction measures after a disaster, as well as measures to restore access to resources. The analysis undertaken has shown that most provisions related to climate change and disaster risk are not found in fisheries-specific policies and legislation but rather in broader climate change laws and policies. This can hinder small-scale fishers from accessing important instruments applicable to them. SSF-LEX aims to present information in an accessible and easy-to-understand format for all users.

1. <https://www.fao.org/voluntary-guidelines-small-scale-fisheries/en> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. FAO. 2021. 2021 COFI Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb3767en> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Cook, K., Rosenbaum, K. L. and Poulain, F. 2021. Building resilience to climate change and disaster risks for small-scale fisheries communities. A human-rights-based approach to the implementation of Chapter 9 of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb7616en> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Barange, M., Bahri, T., Beveridge, M.C.M., Cochrane, K.L., Funge-Smith, S. & Poulain, F. eds. (2018) Impacts of climate change on fisheries and aquaculture: synthesis of current knowledge, adaptation and mitigation options. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Technical Paper No. 627. Rome, FAO. 628 pp. <https://www.fao.org/3/i9705en/i9705en.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Puri, M., Kojakovic, A., Rincon, L., Gallego, J., Vaskalis, I. & Maltsoglou, I. 2023. The small-scale fisheries and energy nexus – Opportunities for renewable energy interventions. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc4903en> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. FAO, Duke University & WorldFish. 2023. Illuminating Hidden Harvests – The contributions of small-scale fisheries to sustainable development. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc4576en> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. FAO. 2023. Informe de la decimoctava reunión ordinaria de la Comisión de Pesca en Pequeña Escala, Artesanal y Acuicultura de América Latina y el Caribe (COPPESAALC). San José, Costa Rica, del 29 al 31 de marzo de 2023. Informe de Pesca y Acuicultura de la FAO N. 1422. Santiago. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc7652es> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Charles, A., Kalikoski, D. & Macnaughton, A. 2019. *Addressing the climate change and poverty nexus: a coordinated approach in the context of the 2030 agenda and the Paris agreement.* Rome. FAO. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/f02ad940-d07d-4030-8993-ac771ca14d18> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. [Addressing the climate change and poverty nexus | Núcleo de Capacitación en Políticas Públicas | Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Alimentación y la Agricultura (fao.org)](https://www.fao.org/in-action/capacitacion-politicas-publicas/cursos/ver/es/c/1608767/?submit=Course+overview) [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Available at [ssflex.fao.org](https://ssflex.fao.org/) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)