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# *Report of the Regional Capacity Development Workshop on Development of National Plan of Action for Small Scale Fisheries (NPOA-SSF) & Preparation of National Roadmaps*

17-19 September 2025  
Fortune Beach Resort, Chennai







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**Regional Capacity Development  
Workshop on  
Development of National Plan of Action  
for Small Scale Fisheries (NPOA-SSF) &  
Preparation of National Roadmaps**

*Fortune Beach Resort, Chennai, 17 – 19 September 2025*

**Workshop Report**



**BOBP**

**Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation (BOBP-IGO)**  
91, Saint Mary's Road, Abiramapuram, Chennai - 600 018. INDIA

## About the organizers



**Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations**

### **Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO)**

FAO is a specialized UN agency founded in 1945 to combat global hunger and promote sustainable agricultural development. Headquartered in Rome, FAO works with governments and international organizations to improve food security, nutrition, and rural livelihoods. It plays a key role in fisheries and aquaculture governance, developing international agreements



### **Department of Fisheries (DoF)**

It is a governmental body responsible for the development, management, and regulation of fisheries and aquaculture in India. It plays a crucial role in formulating policies, implementing schemes, and promoting sustainable fisheries practices to enhance productivity, livelihoods, and food security. The DoF oversees the conservation and management of marine and inland fisheries resources, enforces regulatory frameworks. It also supports capacity-building initiatives, research, and technological advancements to strengthen India's fisheries sector.



### **Bay of Bengal Inter Governmental Organisation (BOBP-IGO)**

The BOBP-IGO is a regional fisheries advisory body with Bangladesh, India, Maldives and Sri Lanka as its contracting parties. It is mandated to enhance cooperation amongst its member countries and other countries (especially, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand) for sustainable fisheries management in the Bay of Bengal region. The BOBP-IGO Secretariat is located at Chennai. The Department of Fisheries, Government of India is the nodal agency from India and the hosting agency.

## **Preparation of Report**

This report on “Regional Capacity Development Workshop on Development of National Plan of Action for Small Scale Fisheries (NPOA-SSF) Preparation of National Roadmaps” has been prepared by BOBP-IGO and FAO. The workshop was organized by the Bay of Bengal Programme Inter – Governmental Organisation (BOBP-IGO) in collaboration with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and Department of Fisheries (DoF), Government of India at Chennai from 17-19 September 2025. The designations employed and the presentation of material in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of BOBP-IGO concerning the legal or development status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

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## Executive Summary

Small-scale fisheries (SSF) play a vital role in food security, livelihoods, and sustainable ocean management in the Bay of Bengal region. Recognizing this significance, a Regional Capacity Development Workshop on "Development of National Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries (NPOA-SSF) & Preparation of National Roadmaps" was held in Chennai, India, from September 17–19, 2025. Organized jointly by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Department of Fisheries, Government of India, and the Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation (BOBP-IGO), the workshop brought together key stakeholders from Bangladesh, India, Maldives, and Sri Lanka, alongside regional experts from FAO, researchers and scientists, members of civil society organisations, representatives of the fishing community. SEAFDEC and the BOBLME Project. The three-day dialogue focused on advancing sustainable small-scale fisheries governance through structured national planning.

Key sessions covered the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries (SSF Guidelines), national SSF profiles and policy diagnostics, ecosystem approaches to fisheries management (EAFM), and the three-stage NPOA-SSF development process (Initiation, Development, Implementation). Presentations included thematic deep dives into tenure rights, gender equality, value chains, climate resilience, and a case study from the Philippines' NPOA-SSF experience. Country delegations presented national policy priorities and challenges, highlighting issues such as declining SSF contributions, legal recognition gaps, climate vulnerabilities, and gender disparities.

Stakeholder groups from the BOBP member countries - Bangladesh, India, Maldives, and Sri Lanka - participated in brainstorming sessions, emphasizing the pivotal role of NPOA-SSF in translating global SSF Guidelines into actionable national frameworks. The discussions emphasized addressing systemic barriers through human rights-based approaches (HRBA) and ensuring inclusive, stakeholder-driven processes. Key considerations included the need for inclusive National Task Forces, securing tenure rights, integrating gender mainstreaming, building climate resilience, and aligning with SDG 14. The importance of regional cooperation through BOBP-IGO and leveraging tools like the SSF Diagnostic Toolbox and IHH infographics was underscored.

The workshop concluded with each country presenting tailored national roadmaps and Terms of Reference for NPOA-SSF development, establishing clear timelines (2025–2028), governance structures, and intervention priorities. Consensus was reached on advancing national task forces, strengthening legal-policy alignment, and fostering regional knowledge exchange to support sustainable SSF development. The deliberations reinforced a shared commitment to securing resilient, equitable, and climate-adaptive small-scale fisheries across the Bay of Bengal region.

## Abbreviation and Acronyms

BOBP-IGO	Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation
BOBLME	Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem
CIFT	ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology
CMFRI	ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute
COFI	Committee on Fisheries (FAO)
DDG	Deputy Director General
DoF	Department of Fisheries
EAFM	Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FGDs	focus group discussions
GIS	Geographic Information System
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
IHH	Illuminating Hidden Harvests
ICSF	International Collective in Support of Fish workers
ICAR	Indian Council of Agricultural Research
IUU	Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (fishing)
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MoFL	Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock
MMSM	Mahavir Machchhimar Sahakari Mandali
NFIFM	National Fisheries Institute of Fisheries Management
NFDP	National Fisheries Development Plan
NGO	non-governmental organization
NPOA-SSF	National Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries
PMMSY	Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEAFDEC	Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center
SSF	Small-Scale Fisheries
VGSSF/SSF Guidelines	Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication
WFF	World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers
WTO	World Trade Organization

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Participants at the workshop

## 1. Introduction

Small-scale fisheries (SSF) are central to food security, livelihoods, and local economies, particularly in the Bay of Bengal region, but they continue to face policy, institutional, and infrastructure gaps. Their sustainable, low-capital, family-oriented practices align closely with Sustainable Development Goal 14 (Life Below Water). Recognizing the need for structured and inclusive action, the formulation of National Plans of Action for SSF (NPOAs-SSF) has emerged as a key mechanism to systematically implement the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines). These plans are rooted in a participatory, human rights-based approach that integrates gender equality, social equity, political commitment, and an ecosystem approach to fisheries management (EAFM).

During the High-Level Meeting (HLM) held in Maldives in February 2025 under the BOBLME-II project, member countries of the BOBP-IGO Bangladesh, India, Maldives, and Sri Lanka acknowledged critical challenges facing the SSF sector, including difficulties in policy targeting, resource constraints, competition, and climate change. The HLM endorsed the development of NPOAs-SSF embedding EAFM, a decision later ratified by the BOBP-IGO Governing Council. In response, FAO and BOBP-IGO have intensified their collaboration through a formal agreement, offering tools and capacity-building workshops to strengthen national task forces in designing context-specific roadmaps and ensuring the effective, inclusive implementation of NPOAs-SSF across the region.

## 2. Inaugural Session

### 2.1 Welcome Address



**Dr. P. Krishnan, Director, BOBP-IGO**, welcomed the Chief Guest, Dr. Abhilaksh Likhi, IAS, Secretary (Fisheries), Government of India, along with Dr. J. K. Jena, Deputy Director General (Fisheries), ICAR, representatives of FAO, and fisheries managers from Bangladesh, India, Maldives, and Sri Lanka. He emphasized that the workshop comes at a crucial juncture to advance the SSF Guidelines and translate them into concrete national and regional actions. Highlighting the central role of small-scale fisheries in livelihoods, nutrition, and economic security, he recalled that FAO issued the Voluntary Guidelines in 2015 and, since then, only a handful of countries globally have notified National Plans of Action for SSF. Despite the Bay of Bengal region being home to over one-third of the world's fishing vessels, member countries are yet to initiate their national plans, making this process urgent. Referring to the Maldives high-level meeting in February 2025, chaired by Dr. Abhilaksh Likhi, he noted the resolution to develop both regional and national plans within a year, building on global experience. To this end, FAO has partnered actively with BOBP, with five officers from Rome participating in the present workshop, and lessons are also being drawn from the Philippines, the only country in Asia-Pacific to have developed a national plan. Dr. Krishnan stressed that this workshop serves as a starting point to examine the Guidelines, identify practical steps, and set a clear timeline for implementation. He added that preparatory work has already begun through three major exercises: development of country-specific IHH infographics,

country SSF profile, and a comprehensive country-level review of legislation and policy relevant to SSF, the preliminary draft of which now provides a strong basis for moving forward.

## 2.1. Guest of Honour



**Dr. J.K. Jena, Deputy Director General (Fisheries), ICAR**, highlighted that small-scale fisheries form the backbone of India's production systems, sustaining livelihoods, nutrition, and cultural traditions, while facing mounting pressures from overfishing, climate change, and pollution. He observed that though discussions on small-scale fisheries date back over 70 years, they continue to dominate marine production, which has grown from less than half a million tonnes in the 1950s to nearly four million tonnes today, placing immense pressure on resources, particularly pelagic stocks such as sardine, mackerel, and anchovies. While traditional practices, small boats, and localized value chains remain characteristic of the sector, he emphasized the need for research-driven strategies to address emerging challenges and improve fisher welfare. Congratulating BOBP-IGO for leading the SSF Plan, he assured ICAR's full support through institutes such as CMFRI and CIFT to strengthen management, conservation, gear development, and value chains, while promoting mariculture as a complementary livelihood option. He cited government initiatives including the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) and efforts to expand artificial reefs and fisheries-related devices, which are expected to scale up in the coming years. He also underscored the critical role of women in post-harvest activities, stressing the need to reduce drudgery and enhance opportunities across the value chain. He concluded by affirming ICAR's commitment to provide sustained technical support, thanking the Ministry of Fisheries under the leadership of Dr. Abhilaksh Likhi, IAS, and appreciating BOBP-IGO for convening this workshop with FAO's partnership.

## 2.2. Overview: SSF Guidelines, Global Implementation Progress and NPOA-SSF



**Ms. Lena Westlund, Senior Fisheries Expert, FAO**, introduced the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines), outlining their vision, emphasizing the vital contribution of small-scale fisheries to food security, livelihoods, and cultural identity, with women playing a key role. She explained that the Guidelines are not a rigid blueprint but a flexible framework adaptable to national and local contexts, and explained the process for their application in three phases: inception, which focuses on raising awareness and building a shared understanding; development, which involves translating the global framework into national or regional plans of action through consultations, legal and policy reviews, and prioritization of responsibilities; and implementation and monitoring, which requires policy measures, community initiatives, and accountability mechanisms to ensure sustainability. Ms. Westlund also highlighted the five thematic areas of the Guidelines: governance of tenure and sustainable resource management, ensuring secure and equitable access rights; social development, employment, and decent work, with a focus on health, education, protection, and safe conditions; value chains, post-harvest and trade, aimed at reducing losses, strengthening markets, and supporting women's participation in value addition; gender equity and equality,

calling for recognition of women’s contributions and equal opportunities; and disaster risk and climate change, focusing on resilience and adaptation to environmental shocks. Together, these elements provide a comprehensive framework for strengthening small-scale fisheries by integrating social, economic, and ecological sustainability, while keeping human rights and community well-being at the center.

### 2.3. Inaugural Address



**Dr. Abhilaksh Likhi, IAS, Secretary (Fisheries), Government of India**, in his address as Chief Guest, expressed pleasure at inaugurating the first regional workshop dedicated to the development of National Plans of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries (NPOA-SSF) in the Bay of Bengal region. He recalled that the initiative was first conceived during the Maldives meeting in February 2025, which focused on embedding an ecosystem approach to fisheries management, and was later endorsed by the BOBP-IGO Governing Council. With most fisheries in the region being small-scale, he underlined the need for inclusive, resilient, and community-driven approaches that address the aspirations and challenges of coastal fishers. Citing India’s achievements, he noted that the country, now the world’s second-largest fish producer, has doubled its production since 2013–14 to a record 19.5 million metric tonnes in 2023–24, supported by investments of over USD 5.31 billion, the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana, and the empowerment of women and fishing communities. He highlighted ongoing efforts in digital transformation through the National Fisheries Digital Portal, the creation of 34 fisheries and aquaculture clusters, promotion of value chains and traceability, and the development of 100 climate-resilient coastal villages. On the global stage, he reaffirmed India’s leadership as a disciplined, low-subsidy nation at the WTO and its strong advocacy for climate justice in fisheries. Stressing that the NPOA-SSF framework and the new COFI sub-committee on fisheries management offer vital platforms for developing countries, he urged member states to establish national task forces to guide NPOA development, assuring India’s readiness to share experiences on implementation, insurance models, and climate-resilient practices. He called on delegates to use the workshop to chart roadmaps and mechanisms that ensure no fishing community is left behind, envisioning the Bay of Bengal by 2030 as a global model for sustainable small-scale fisheries.

### 2.4. Concluding Remarks

In his concluding remarks, Dr. P. Krishnan, Director, BOBP-IGO, expressed gratitude to the Chief Guest, Dr. Abhilaksh Likhi, IAS, Secretary (Fisheries), Government of India, for his inspiring vision of inclusive and resilient fisheries and for urging the creation of national task forces to fast-track the development of NPOAs. He acknowledged the valuable reflections of Dr. J.K. Jena, Deputy Director General (Fisheries), ICAR, on the enduring centrality of small-scale fisheries and the opportunities to strengthen value chains and fisher welfare. He extended special thanks to Ms. Lena Westlund, Senior Fisheries Expert, FAO, for her comprehensive presentation on the SSF Guidelines, highlighting the thematic areas and process that will guide member countries in developing their plans of action. Dr. Krishnan reiterated that the workshop has laid a strong foundation for collective progress, announcing that a draft NPOA-SSF would be prepared at the earliest as a model for replication. He expressed confidence that with the commitment of

governments, research institutions, and international partners, the Bay of Bengal region would emerge as a global leader in securing sustainable small-scale fisheries.

### **3. Small-Scale Fisheries in the BOBLME Region**

#### **3.1. SSF Profile of the countries and Policy and legal diagnostics - key findings from the region**

Since the 1970s, industrial fisheries have grown rapidly and now dominate across the Bay of Bengal, while artisanal and subsistence fisheries show signs of decline said Dr. P. Krishnan. Although small-scale fisheries remain significant, their share in total catch has been steadily dwindling, with technological adoption uneven across sectors. Dr. Krishnan pointed out the inherent diversity of SSF, where gears range from hand-gathering to near-industrial operations, and emphasized the need for a clearer definition of small-scale fisheries to guide policy. He suggested that vulnerability- and risk-based definitions could be more effective, allowing countries to categorize SSF based on local socio-economic and environmental contexts rather than static metrics. He underlined the importance of mainstreaming the ecosystem approach to fisheries management (EAFM) within SSF policies to ensure sustainability, stakeholder engagement, and climate adaptation. Presenting country profiles, he outlined the socio-economic importance of fisheries, governance arrangements, and common management tools, while also noting that SSF is often defined by exclusion in national laws. He drew attention to best practices in the region, such as community-managed Hilsa sanctuaries in Bangladesh, MSC-certified tuna in Maldives, co-managed lagoons in Sri Lanka, and women-led self-help groups in India, stressing that women remain central to post-harvest activities but face persistent barriers to participation. He also introduced the second edition of the FAO SSF Diagnostic Toolbox, now being piloted in South Asia, which uses legal, policy, and community-based assessments to evaluate alignment with the SSF Guidelines. Preliminary findings suggest community perceptions often showing variation compared to formal frameworks in the four countries'. Dr Krishnan concluded that effective implementation of the NPOA-SSF will require attention to legal and policy alignment, community perspectives, and collective action, building on these diagnostic tools to strengthen small-scale fisheries governance in the region.

#### **3.2. National policy priorities for SSF sector country wise perspectives**

##### **3.2.1. Bangladesh**



**Mr. Shoukot Kabir Chowdhury, Senior Assistant Director, Department of Fisheries, Bangladesh and National Project Coordinator, BOBLME-II Project,** emphasized that small-scale fisheries are the backbone of Bangladesh's fisheries sector, contributing substantially to food security, employment, and exports, with artisanal fishers forming the majority in both inland and marine waters. The policy and legal framework, including the National Fisheries Policy 1998, Marine Fisheries Harvest Policy 2023, Marine Fisheries Management Plan for Artisanal Fisheries 2023, and the Hilsa Fisheries Management Action Plan 2003, demonstrates Bangladesh's commitment to responsible fishing, biodiversity conservation, and co-management. Highlighting the Sustainable Coastal and Marine Fisheries Project, he noted that more than 53,000 households across 450 fishing villages have

been mobilized into savings groups, producer collectives, and co-management committees that actively prevent illegal fishing, enforce seasonal bans, diversify livelihoods, and strengthen community resilience. He further underlined the important role of women, with nearly all women from fishing households engaged in project activities and over half taking part in decision-making. While recognizing achievements, he also pointed out key challenges in legal recognition, access to finance and insurance, safety at sea, education, market access, and addressing climate change and pollution. He affirmed that Bangladesh remains committed to strengthening community-based organizations, fostering inclusive governance, and advancing adaptive co-management to secure sustainable and resilient small-scale fisheries for the future.

### 3.2.2. India



**Dr Sanjay Pandey, Deputy Commissioner (Fy.), Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Government of India**, underlined that India is the world’s second largest fish producer, with total production reaching 18.4 million tonnes in 2023–24, of which nearly three-fourths are contributed by inland fisheries. Over 28 million people are engaged in fisheries, with small-scale fisheries forming the backbone of the sector through traditional, labour-intensive and

community-based practices across 13 coastal states and UTs. India’s approach is anchored in three strategic pillars—ecological sustainability, economic viability, and social equity—backed by flagship programmes such as the Blue Revolution, Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund, and the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana, which together have mobilized more than USD 4.4 billion in targeted investments since 2014–15. He further pointed to initiatives including periodic resource assessments, uniform fishing bans, gear regulations, creation of climate-resilient villages, installation of artificial reefs, conservation of endangered species, social security coverage, accident insurance, vessel communication systems, and empowerment of cooperatives and self-help groups.

The speaker drew attention to challenges faced by the small-scale fisheries sector, including overfishing, destructive practices, pollution, habitat degradation, conflicts with industrial fleets, low incomes, limited credit access, and vulnerability to climate change. Stressing the advantages of SSF such as eco-friendly practices, low carbon emissions, cultural heritage, and poverty alleviation, he emphasized the need for a time bound National Plan of Action for SSF, supported by inclusive National Task Forces, regional collaboration through BOBP-IGO, and digital formalization of fisher databases. He also called for strengthening fisheries value chains, supporting financial inclusion and insurance for women and small fishers, promoting sustainable practices through management plans, and leveraging FAO’s expertise to align India’s NPOA-SSF with the SSF Guidelines. He reiterated that the way forward lies in integrating traditional knowledge with modern enterprise, scaling up alternate livelihoods, ensuring resource sustainability, and addressing cross-cutting issues such as IUU fishing, traceability, skill development, and climate change adaptation to secure the future of India’s small-scale fisheries.

### 3.2.3. Maldives



**Ms Aishath Sarah Hashim, Fisheries Officer, Maldives** outlined the structural and policy context of small-scale fisheries, highlighting both achievements and emerging challenges. It was noted that while fisheries remain the backbone of the Maldivian economy and culture, rapid technological changes and expansion of industrial operations have altered the balance between small-scale and larger-scale sectors. Artisanal fisheries continue to play a central role, yet their share of catch has declined over time, with reef resources under growing pressure. The presentation emphasized the internal diversity of SSF, ranging from traditional, family-based operations to highly capitalized gears, underscoring the need for a clear and context-specific definition of “small-scale” in order to guide policy outreach. Examples of good practices were shared, including MSC-certified pole-and-line tuna fisheries, social safety nets such as the Income Assurance Scheme for fishers, and innovative platforms like *eDhumashi* that empower women processors to access markets directly. At the same time, challenges were recognized in maintaining equity, ensuring sustainable resource use, and addressing gender barriers in participation and decision-making. The Maldives also underlined its active engagement with the FAO SSF Diagnostic Toolbox process and the importance of aligning national legal and policy frameworks with the SSF Guidelines. The country’s experience reflects that strengthening community participation, safeguarding tenure rights, and mainstreaming ecosystem-based approaches will be key for sustaining small-scale fisheries while adapting to climate change and globalization pressures.

### 3.2.4. Sri Lanka



**Ms T. K. S. N. Karunaratne, Assistant Director, Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Sri Lanka**, provided a comprehensive overview of the fisheries sector, underlining its economic, nutritional, and socio-cultural significance. With total production exceeding half a million metric tonnes, Sri Lanka’s fisheries comprise coastal, offshore, and deep-sea operations alongside extensive inland and aquaculture activities, supported by over 59,000 fishing craft and a population of around 300,000 engaged in the sector. Small-scale fisheries dominate, relying on low-tech gear and small vessels across marine, lagoon, and inland waters, and remain vital for livelihoods and affordable protein supply. However, challenges were noted, including declining catches, IUU fishing, transboundary pressures, competition from industrial fleets, post-harvest losses, safety at sea, climate change, pollution, limited market access, and governance bottlenecks, with women and vulnerable groups particularly affected. The presentation highlighted positive trends such as community-based aquaculture, sea cucumber and seaweed farming, and diversification into oyster, mussel, and crab culture, supported by a network of harbours, landing centres, processing plants, and export facilities. She said that they would need to focus on strengthening cold chains, improving safety, enforcing IUU regulations, digitalising licensing, investing in infrastructure, promoting cooperatives, expanding credit and insurance, supporting climate adaptation and mangrove restoration, and enhancing data collection and monitoring. The speaker stressed the urgency of recognizing SSF in national

planning through the NPOA-SSF, scaling up post-harvest and safety investments, and mobilising donor support to build resilient and sustainable small-scale fisheries for the country's future.

## **4. SSF Guidelines: Principles and Factors to Consider in NPOA-SSSF Development**

### **4.1. Principles and Thematic Areas**

The presentation on the SSF Guidelines – Principles and Thematic Areas outlined the core objectives of the Guidelines, which include advancing the right to adequate food, promoting equitable development and poverty eradication, ensuring sustainable and responsible fisheries management and supporting culturally rooted, ecosystem-friendly approaches to fisheries governance, delivered jointly by Ms Ana Suárez Dussan (who joined remotely) and Ms Lena Westlund. They explained that the Guidelines are anchored in a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA), with governments as primary duty-bearers and small-scale fishers, fish workers, and fishing communities as rights-holders. The HRBA is operationalized through the PANTHER principles: Participation, Accountability, Non-discrimination, Transparency, Human Dignity, Empowerment, and Rule of Law. The principles of the Guidelines underscore respect for culture, equity, gender equality, social responsibility, sustainability, and holistic and integrated approaches. Particular attention was given to the Right to Food, which is more than food security alone, it includes physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food at all times, supported by secure tenure and sustainable livelihoods. The presenters went through the thematic areas of the Guidelines in detail. They stressed that enabling environments, through policy coherence, institutional coordination, information, research, and capacity development, are essential for effective implementation. They noted that the SSF Guidelines provide a globally recognized framework linking fishing rights with human rights, aiming to empower communities, strengthen participation, and promote sustainable development but success depended on translating these principles into national and local actions.

### **4.2. Sustainable Resource Management**

Key Learnings from the BOBLME Project on Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) highlighted that the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem (BOBLME) initiative, implemented during 2009–2015 with the support of GEF, NORAD, and SIDA, was a classic example of international cooperation for the management of shared marine resources, as presented by Dr E. Vivekanandan. The project produced a Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) and a Strategic Action Programme (SAP), endorsed in 2015, which laid the foundation for Phase II (2023–2028). The current phase embraces a broader and inclusive approach that balances ecological and human well-being, integrates biodiversity conservation and climate change considerations, and stresses trade-offs, adaptive management, stakeholder participation, and regional cooperation. Dr Vivekanandan underlined that fisheries in the Bay of Bengal are predominantly small-scale, multi-gear, and multi-species, with 3.7 million fishers and several biodiversity hotspots, yet face pressures from unsustainable fishing, habitat loss, pollution, and climate change. Within this context, the BOBLME project operationalizes EAFM through fishery management units (FMUs) across member countries, following a step-by-step,

issue-based, and scale-sensitive approach. He emphasized that small, localized fisheries such as clams or estuarine set-bagnets are managed differently from large-scale migratory fisheries like tuna, requiring coordination across governance boundaries. Lessons show that governance must prioritize enabling legislation, co-management, transboundary cooperation, and precautionary principles. Policies exist but need effective implementation, particularly in embedding community-based management into formal co-management systems. Human well-being must remain central, with quick tangible benefits, livelihood diversification, women's inclusion in decision-making, and the use of incentives to shift behaviour. Equally, ecological well-being can be advanced by demonstrating habitat restoration, sustainable stock use, and alternative income from eco-friendly aquaculture. He also stressed the importance of networking EAF practitioners to build capacity, share knowledge, and sustain EAF beyond project periods. He concluded that the BOBLME project will institutionalize EAF in selected FMUs, expand from small to larger fisheries, and address long-term regional challenges like climate change, ensuring that EAF is both a practical management tool and a governance framework for the Bay of Bengal region.

### **4.3. Tenure in Small-Scale Fisheries**

The presentation on Tenure in Small-Scale Fisheries explained that tenure defines how societies and laws regulate people's relationships with land, coasts, water bodies and natural resources, determining access, use, duration and conditions. The presentation was by Ms Jasmine George of Turning Tides. She emphasized that secure tenure rights are essential for the social, cultural, and economic well-being of small-scale fishing communities and form the foundation of sustainable development. Linking this to the SSF Guidelines and SDG 14(b), she stressed that responsible governance of tenure is central to human rights, poverty reduction, food security, and rural development, with special recognition of women's rights. However, she questioned whether current commitments are sufficient, arguing that tenure security must be seen as a precursor to broader well-being, livelihoods, and self-determination. The speaker pointed out that loss of customary tenure has caused open access, overfishing, conflicts, and weakening of traditional systems, while coastal development, conservation regimes, and climate change have displaced communities and eroded their access to resources. She observed that a narrow interpretation of tenure as merely access and use rights leaves fishers with subsistence but little agency, whereas tenure should reflect relational and cultural dimensions that govern community life. She cited the Padu system of Tamil Nadu as a resilient traditional tenure practice, though exclusionary to women, and described how spiritual and customary boundaries in Andhra Pradesh fisheries communities continue to influence governance. She concluded by urging reflection on how tenure is defined in different contexts, what undermines or strengthens tenure security, and how inclusive tenure governance can ensure that small-scale fishers not only survive but exercise rights, agency, and power in managing their resources.

### **4.4. Value Chains, Post-harvest and Trade**

Critical post-harvest challenges in small-scale fisheries were highlighted by **Mr Ganesh Nakhawa** from Mumbai, India, who emphasized that infrastructure deficits, price opacity and logistical unpredictability drive significant losses, such as 90 percent of India's catch getting degraded during transport to distant markets. Key issues include inadequate ice/transport

facilities, lack of price transparency for fishers, and fragmented value chains that force fish being transported up to 1,000 km without cold storage, resulting in quality deterioration and consequent income erosion. Proposed solutions centred on a "reverse value chain" approach, starting from market requirements (e.g., international prices for tuna/squid) to determine necessary infrastructure, and leveraging digital tools (e.g., mobile-based price alerts, AI-driven harvest predictions) to enable demand-driven logistics. Successful pilots in Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra demonstrated that integrating climate forecasts, coordinated truck deployment, and village-level freezing hubs could reduce waste. The speaker advocated for scaling cooperative models (e.g., multi-village collectives) and domestic frozen-fish markets to minimize losses, stressing that systemic investment in cold chains, digital price platforms, and centralized processing is essential to transform SSF from subsistence operations into economically viable, climate-resilient enterprises

Systemic barriers facing small-scale fishing communities in post-conflict Sri Lanka were underscored, particularly in Kankesanthurai, where war-induced displacement, inadequate infrastructure, and traditional fishing practices impede recovery, as highlighted by **Ms Seetha Sivasubramaniam**, Member Fisheries, Civil Society Organization, Jaffna, Sri Lanka. Seetha highlighted critical challenges: limited market access forcing women to sell dried fish from door to door, climate disruptions preventing fishing activities, and financial losses from illegal bottom trawling by Indian vessels that destroy equipment and deplete resources without compensation. She advocated for actionable strategies integrating traditional knowledge, sustainable resource management, and climate-resilient alternatives to address overfishing and environmental degradation.

#### **4.5. Gender Equality**

The presentation on Gender and Aquatic Food Value Chains by **Ms Manoela Militão De Siqueira** emphasized that gender equality is fundamental to the SSF Guidelines and sustainable fisheries governance. She explained the distinction between sex, which is biological, and gender, which relates to socially constructed roles, responsibilities, and expectations that vary across cultures and evolve over time. For FAO, gender equality means ensuring women and men enjoy equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities in decision-making, access to resources, livelihoods, and benefits from development. She highlighted that gender equality enhances sustainability by increasing productivity, reducing food loss, creating business opportunities, enabling social inclusion, and disseminating environmentally friendly practices that support climate-resilient value chains. However, she also identified persistent gender-based constraints, such as limited access to knowledge, training, assets, financial services, technologies, leadership, and decision-making, which undermine women's agency, productivity, and entrepreneurial potential. These constraints create power imbalances, reduce efficiency, and limit food security and innovation along the fisheries value chain.

To address these challenges, the speaker called for analysing each stage: pre-harvest, harvest, processing, and marketing, through a gender lens, mapping the ratio of men to women, their tasks, and the barriers they face, and then developing targeted solutions. She stressed that tackling even one constraint at each stage can improve equity, unlock women's potential, and make value chains more resilient and just. In closing, she reiterated that integrating gender

equality into fisheries is not only about fairness but also about achieving sustainable, inclusive, and climate-ready aquatic food systems.

#### **4.5.1. Group Activity**

Following the presentation, participants carried out a gender-based analysis of pre-harvest, harvest, processing, and marketing activities. They examined the ratio of men to women, their respective tasks, and the barriers they face. A brief summary of their discussions is provided below.

##### **Group I: (Women in Fish Value Chain)**

The group presentation highlighted the seafood processing workflow, starting with sorting and grading, followed by cleaning, cutting, salting, drying, shuffling, and packing. Marketing activities, including bargaining, distribution, and transportation, were also identified as part of the process. The workforce is predominantly women (around 90%), while men mainly serve as owners, quality control supervisors, or managers. Key constraints noted include lack of sanitation facilities, unhygienic working conditions, low wages due to the informal nature of the sector, limited access to potable water and safe food, and the need for women workers to bring their children to work due to lack of schooling options. These issues were raised as critical challenges to be addressed in the processing sector.

##### **Group II: (Women in Fish Harvest)**

The group presentation focused on the clam-picking harvest as an example of small-scale fisheries operations. Women play a major role, handling 60% of the harvest and performing all cleaning and washing activities, while men (40%) are primarily involved in transporting the catch to markets or factories. In the processing stage, women are employed by factory owners (mostly men) for cleaning and processing tasks. The discussion highlighted the need for financial capability training for women to strengthen their role in the value chain. Additionally, it was noted that licenses are required for clam picking, and specific tools such as clam forks and shovels are essential for the activity.

##### **Review of Group Discussions**

The groups emphasized the central role of women in small-scale fisheries, with Group I highlighting their dominance in seafood processing and marketing, and Group II noting their major contribution to harvesting (like clam, and some crustaceans) and post-harvest cleaning. Key challenges identified include poor working conditions, low wages, limited access to resources, and the need for financial and capacity-building support to strengthen women's participation across the value chain.

#### **4.6. IHH Approach, Country Infographics and SSF Characterization Approach**

The Illuminating Hidden Harvest (IHH) is a landmark multidisciplinary initiative that quantifies small-scale fisheries (SSF) contributions across environmental, economic, social, nutritional, governance, and gender dimensions. An overview was presented by **Dr Mar Mancha-Cisneros of Michigan State University** through a virtual presentation. The initiative uses a “tapestry of approaches” integrating global databases such as FAO catch statistics, 58 national case studies

covering 68% of global marine and 63% of inland catch, FAO member-state questionnaires, household surveys, and thematic analyses. Key findings for Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, and Maldives revealed SSF's dominance in national catches, with 98% in Bangladesh, 37% in India, 84% in Sri Lanka, and 100% in Maldives. The presentation also highlighted substantial livelihood dependence, including 68.4 million people in Bangladesh, 76.3 million in India, 4.3 million in Sri Lanka, and 153,600 in Maldives; critical nutritional security, such as 36.5 million people in Bangladesh relying on SSF for 20% of key nutrient intake; and gender-disaggregated data indicating 30–40% women primarily in post-harvest and subsistence roles. The study introduced a characterization matrix scoring fisheries on 13 attributes (gear type, vessel size, operational range, ownership, market integration, etc.) across a 0–39 scale, enabling standardized cross-country comparisons and revealing SSF as a continuum rather than a binary category; this framework identified five global archetypes: low-tech safety nets (Archetypes 1–2, e.g., gleaning in Fiji), seasonal operations (Archetype 3), and capital-intensive economic engines (Archetypes 4–5, e.g., Maldivian tuna vessels), demonstrating that single-criterion definitions (e.g., vessel length) risk misrepresenting SSF diversity and excluding critical fisheries from policy support. By linking fishery units, homogeneous groups defined by geography, gear, or species, to multidimensional data, the IHH approach broke the "chicken-and-egg cycle" of SSF invisibility in national planning, providing policymakers with evidence to prioritize targeted investments in tenure security, gender equity, climate resilience, and co-management, while enabling scalable, context-specific interventions for sustainable SSF development aligned with the SSF Guidelines and SDG 14.

## **5. NPOA-SSF: A Stage-wise Guiding Process**

### **5.1. Overview of process**

Small-scale fisheries in the region face increasing vulnerability due to climate change, with cyclonic disturbances in the Arabian Sea increasing from an average of 1.2 to 2.5 between 1990 and 2021, and the Bay of Bengal, already the world's warmest ocean, warming at an accelerating rate of 0.12°C per decade, as highlighted by P. Krishnan. Various countries have implemented national measures aligned with the SSF Guidelines, including India's National Action Plan on Climate Change and Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana, Bangladesh's National Adaptation Plan and Delta Plan 2100, Sri Lanka's National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, and Maldives' Climate Change Policy Framework. The presentation introduced BOBSAFE, a comprehensive FAO-BOBP plan designed to provide guidance on international best practices to improve safety, promote decent working conditions, and extend social protection in the marine fisheries sector. Recommendations for regional alignment include strengthening policy coherence, enforcing accountability, scaling inclusive adaptation, and enhancing regional collaboration through shared climate-risk data platforms and regional IUU task forces. The presentation emphasized that building climate resilience requires innovations in fishing craft and gear, technology-driven disaster management using satellites, drones, GIS applications, and AI, as well as research on species response to climate change and adaptive management strategies.

## **5.2. NPOA-SSF Development Process: Initiation Stage**

A structured three stage approach with Stage 1 (Initiation), Stage 2 (Development), and Stage 3 (Implementation) was outlined by the FAO team. Stage 2, the primary focus, involves seven sequential steps. Step 2-1: Process Launch and Awareness building, covers event planning, execution, and publicity. Step 2-2: NPOA SSF Intervention Logic, is developed through problem statements, specific objectives, outcomes, outputs, activities, and assumptions aligned with SSF Guidelines objectives. Step 2-3: Stakeholder Consultation, is conducted via multisectoral workshops and feedback collation, emphasizing demographic, geographical, and management area considerations. Step 2-4: NPOA SSF Log frame, links the intervention logic to monitoring indicators. Step 2-5: NPOA SSF Draft, is prepared using templates covering the introduction, sector profile, implementation strategies, activities with workplans, and monitoring frameworks. Step 2-6: Draft NPOA SSF Consultation, mirrors Step 2-3 for validation. Step 2-7: Final NPOA SSF Publication, involves finalization, endorsement, and dissemination. Key tools include the intervention logic framework, the log frame for MEL integration, and iterative stakeholder engagement, ensuring participatory, context specific, and actionable national plans. This approach reinforces the workshop's emphasis on inclusive, science- based fisheries governance.

After providing an account of the stages, a breakout group session on the initiation stage of NPOA-SSF development was conducted. Roles were assigned to facilitators, who guided the process focus; rapporteurs, who documented key points; and timekeepers, who ensured adherence to the schedule. The session focused on reviewing the SSF profile and IHH infographics to identify data gaps and inform NPOA-SSF planning. Participants validated findings from the SSF legal and policy diagnostic to prioritize gaps and align NPOA-SSF interventions. Comprehensive stakeholder mapping was conducted across national, regional, and local levels. This included categorizing stakeholder types, such as fisher groups, public-sector organizations, and NGOs, assessing their influence and impact using a matrix, mapping connections like governance-researcher linkages and fisher-NGO collaborations, and documenting interests to ensure gender-sensitive representation.

Transitioning to the development stage, stakeholder consultation strategies emphasized maximizing representation across regions, fisheries, and stakeholder diversity. Tailored materials, such as pre-draft questionnaires or presentations, were prepared, existing processes leveraged, and communication channels established, with timelines adapted to national contexts. The implementation stage discussion identified top challenges, including resource constraints and coordination barriers, as well as opportunities, such as policy windows and community mobilization. Practical recommendations were proposed to address these challenges and harness opportunities for effective NPOA-SSF execution.

### **5.2.1. Working Group Reports**

#### **1) Bangladesh**

The experts from Bangladesh, reviewing the SSF profile and IHH infographics prepared by the BOBP-IGO team, said that they would need to clearly define objectives and finalize both legal and

working definitions of small-scale fisheries, which would then be validated through the National Task Force.

The team reported that in the draft SSF legal and policy diagnostic, almost all legal issues had been addressed. They further noted that the NPOA-SSF would help policymakers' bridge remaining gaps and support the effective implementation of the SSF Guidelines. For the stakeholder engagement strategy, to ensure maximum representation, consultations should be conducted at both regional and national levels with participation from multiple agencies. The draft NPOA-SSF should be prepared first, and the consultations would then be based on this draft. Currently, there are no processes or structures that could be leveraged. For communication with the identified stakeholders, the team planned to use official letters, emails, and phone calls. Finally, on the expected timeline, the team indicated that it would take approximately one year, from October 2025 to October 2026.

The team conducted a stakeholder mapping during the session. The mapping identified different types of stakeholders in the small-scale seafood value chain, highlighting both specific organizations and individuals, as well as gaps. They also prepared a matrix indicating influence and impact. Key stakeholders with limited influence but highly affected by decisions include fisher groups and post-harvest actors, while influential organizations include fisheries organisations and funding agencies at the international level. At the regional level, influential groups include the Boat Owner Associations, Boat Makers Associations, and Landing Centre Fish Workers Associations.

The team identified resource partners and elected representatives as influential decision-makers, while suppliers to small-scale fishers were recognized as the most affected by these decisions. The team also identified the connections between stakeholders in the small-scale seafood value chain. Strong connections were observed between governance and research, fishers and NGOs, fishers and post-harvest actors, suppliers and fishers, and research and NGOs.

The stakeholder mapping highlighted that, except for the research group, all primary stakeholders including fisher groups, suppliers to small-scale fisheries, post-harvest actors, elected representatives, civil servants, non-governmental organizations, and resource partners had weak knowledge of the SSF Guidelines and the National Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries (NPOA-SSF). While the research group showed a medium level of awareness, the rest displayed limited familiarity with these frameworks.

## **2) India**

### Inland Fisheries

The Indian Inland team's review pointed out that a separate analysis of the legal and policy framework had to be carried out. Separate national- and state-wise profiles for inland fisheries are required, with clear segregation between inland capture and culture fisheries. Data on inland water bodies such as rivers, reservoirs, estuaries, lagoons, and wetlands should be disaggregated at the district and taluk levels. Similarly, resource user data, including the fisher population associated with each water body, must be documented in a disaggregated manner.

Catch and landing data need to be recorded and collected by water body type and species, along with information on the craft and gear used.

Details of social welfare and security measures, including the number of beneficiaries, as well as the extent and membership of cooperatives, should be compiled. Governance mechanisms across different states, covering tenure, licensing, and registration, require systematic assessment, and the typology of data collection should be discussed at the national level. The scope of inland fisheries, including both capture and traditional culture practices, should also be clearly defined, along with documentation of existing tenure systems and identification of small-scale fish workers engaged in commercial aquaculture. Preparation of state-specific infographics is necessary to capture traditional and small-scale aquaculture, including area and technology. The sector remains largely informal, unorganized, and dispersed, with limited social security coverage, while many fishers continue to depend on mixed and part-time livelihoods.

The stakeholder mapping of the sector was conducted by the India Inland team, which identified major groups at the national level. The team attempted to identify the influential and affected stakeholders and suggested that fishers, direct producers (including fishers, indigenous communities, women, and traditional fish farmers) were the most affected, while donors and the state were identified as the most influential stakeholders. With respect to stakeholder connectivity, research and NGOs, as well as suppliers and post-harvest actors, showed medium connections, while fishers and governance and most other stakeholders exhibited weak connections.

#### Marine Fisheries

The India Marine team discussed the review of the SSF profile and IHH infographics, which highlighted several data and information gaps and outlined plans for updating. Key issues included the contested definition of SSF, the availability of craft- and gear-based data from CMFRI, and the lack of depth- and distance-wise data. Information on people not using crafts or not registered, gender-disaggregated data, fishing effort, and details on supply chain actors were also missing. Additional gaps included data on HDI indicators such as life expectancy and mortality, the need to update NFDP and census data, and information from RealCRAFT. Societies registered outside fisheries cooperative acts were not properly captured, and lists of notified or traditional co-managed fisheries were incomplete. Much of the data was piecemeal, highlighting considerations for NPOA-SSF planning, including the need to involve societies in data collection and policy support, establish mechanisms to collect and collate data at different levels, document working conditions, and identify stakeholder groups, including vulnerable and marginalized communities.

The need for a comprehensive marine fisheries management act covering the entire value chain and assessing the extent of compliance was highlighted. The review also explored how the NPOA-SSF can address these findings through broad-based stakeholder consultations, ensuring representation of “voiceless groups,” and recognizing traditional and customary practices.

The stakeholder mapping identified key types of actors across national, regional, and local levels in the small-scale seafood value chain. The team identified the most vulnerable groups as tribal communities, gleaners/barefoot fishers, children, women, persons with disabilities, and individuals of the third gender, followed by migrants operating non-motorised craft. In contrast,

the most influential stakeholders were identified as fisher associations/unions, boat owner associations, and the central and state departments of fisheries. Using a prioritisation scale of 1 to 10, the assessment further revealed that awareness of the SSF Guidelines was highest among the Department of Fisheries and research institutions, which scored 9 out of 10, while fishers scored 4.

### **3) Maldives**

The Maldives team noted that the preliminary review of the SSF profile and IHH infographics revealed gaps in community-level information, with insufficient data collected from local communities. Additionally, there is a lack of gender-disaggregated data across all processes. From the perspective of NPOA-SSF planning, the review highlights the importance of involving key stakeholders, including fishers, processors, and other relevant actors, to ensure representative insights from different atolls and, within them, various islands. The review also underscores the need to better understand the role of women in small-scale fisheries, particularly in post-harvest activities, to ensure their contributions are accurately reflected in planning and policy interventions.

Regarding the SSF legal and policy diagnostic, the Maldives team highlighted that validation of findings, including priority areas and gaps, is largely consistent with the pre-filled legal profile. One specific observation is that Maldives is not a party to the Ramsar Convention; otherwise, few revisions were noted. In terms of how the NPOA-SSF can address these findings, the team emphasized the need for better integration with government data, which would allow for a more structured approach and facilitate management planning. Strengthening the integration of data collection systems, such as ensuring gender-disaggregated data, was also identified as critical to support evidence-based policy and inclusive small-scale fisheries governance.

The Maldives team identified major stakeholders involved in the small-scale seafood value chain across national, regional, and local levels. Key stakeholders include fisher groups such as pole-and-line and reef-based fishers; suppliers like MTCC, fuel providers, and boat builders; and post-harvest actors such as MIFCO and private retailers. Public-sector stakeholders include local government bodies, island and atoll councils, and ministries responsible for fisheries, environment, finance, and social development. The Maldives Marine Research Institute and select NGOs also contribute at various levels. Development partners such as JICA, the World Bank, and IDB were noted as resource partners. The mapping also emphasized the need for gender-sensitive stakeholder analysis to ensure inclusive representation from the outset.

Discussing on the stakeholders scores in influential power and affected by decisions, the team identifies fishers and processors as most affected and the influential power is by Parliament, President's office and large private companies. The Maldives team identified strong connections among a few primary stakeholders, particularly between fishers and post-harvest actors, as well as between post-harvest actors and suppliers.

### **4) Sri Lanka**

The review of the SSF profile and IHH infographics revealed several critical data and information gaps. Notably, 30% of fish production and 47% of the fishery-dependent population are unreported when compared to the IHH data. Additionally, the national profile lacks a clear

definition of Small-Scale Fisheries (SSF), and there is no available data on the number of women employed in the fisheries sector. These gaps highlight the need to strengthen data collection systems, particularly by introducing digital tools at landing sites to improve data accuracy and traceability. From an NPOA-SSF planning perspective, key considerations include updating the SSF profile using the more comprehensive IHH data, ensuring the systematic collection of gender-disaggregated data, and clearly defining SSF to support aligned and inclusive policy development.

The review of the SSF legal and policy diagnostic validated key findings, including identified priority areas and existing gaps. The National Fisheries Act of 1996 has been revised to incorporate relevant international legally binding and non-binding instruments, reflecting efforts to align national frameworks with global standards. The proposed Fishery Act (3G) includes reference to subsistence fisheries, while Section 5.1.27 of the proposed Fishery Policy explicitly addresses the effective participation of small-scale fisheries (SSF). In terms of how the NPOA-SSF can build on these developments, it is noted that five of the goals outlined in the proposed Fishery Act specifically target SSF, and the overarching goals of the proposed policy further reinforce support for the SSF sector. These alignments offer a strong foundation for advancing inclusive and sustainable small-scale fisheries governance through the NPOA-SSF.

The stakeholder group of fishers is organized across national, regional, and local levels. At the national level, it includes the National Fisheries Federation and the National Fishery Solidarity. At the regional level, the group comprises the District Fisheries Federation, Southern Fisheries Organisation, and Divisional Fishery Organisation. At the local level, key stakeholders include the Sri Vimukthi Fisherwomen Society in Negombo, Rural Fishery Organisations, Fishery Cooperative Societies, and Aquaculture Societies. The stakeholder groups most affected, in order of impact, are boat owners, vendors, fishermen, processors, followed by women and children. In terms of decision-making power, authority flows from the Minister and deputy minister to the Secretary General, then to the Chairpersons of NAQDA/NARA and CCD, and finally to field-level officers. Connections among stakeholders were stronger- NGOs with fishers, post-harvest and suppliers; Fishers and governance also show strong connections. Governance sector showed moderate connection with Researchers, NGOs, post-harvest and suppliers.

### **5.3. SSF Development Stage including Tools and Activities**

#### **5.3.1. Overview**

**Mr. Rubén Sánchez** presented a comprehensive overview of the NPOA-SSF development process. He emphasized Stage 2 (Development) as the critical phase for transforming stakeholder inputs into actionable plans. Stage 2 is structured through seven sequential steps. Step 2-1, Process Launch and Awareness-building, involves planning and executing launch events with strategic publicity to build broad awareness. Step 2-2, NPOA-SSF Intervention Logic, develops a problem statement, specific objectives, outcomes, outputs, and activities using focus group discussions. This ensures alignment with the six SSF Guidelines objectives, such as food security, equitable development, and sustainable resource use. Step 2-3, Stakeholder Consultation, employs multisectoral workshops and feedback collation, adapted to demographic, geographic, and fishery-specific contexts. Step 2-4, NPOA-SSF Logframe, creates a detailed logical framework integrating monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) indicators.

Step 2-5, NPOA-SSF Draft, compiles the plan using standardized templates covering introduction, sector profiles, implementation strategies, workplans, and MEL frameworks. Step 2-6, Draft NPOA-SSF Consultation, validates the draft through iterative stakeholder engagement. Step 2-7, Final NPOA-SSF Publication, formalizes endorsement, publication, and dissemination. Key tools include the intervention logic framework, linking problems to solutions, the logframe for structured MEL integration, and adaptive consultation strategies. These tools are designed to produce context-specific, participatory, and measurable national plans for sustainable small-scale fisheries governance.

### **5.3.2. Case study: Philippines NPOA-SSF Development Process**

Ms. Rebecca Andong presented the Philippines' NPOA-SSF development process. She contextualized the initiative within the Philippines' fisheries sector, where municipal fisheries contribute 26.64% to national production and employ 2.19 million fisherfolk. When the NPOA-SSF was mooted, there were two ongoing FAO-supported projects which helped in supporting the development of the NPOA-SSF. The three-stage process that included Initiation which took place from December 2022 to May 2023, Development from June 2023 to June 2024, and Implementation from Oct 2024 onward required multi-agency collaboration. The National Technical Working Group (NTWG) was established during Stage 1 to lead efforts. Stage 2 featured nationwide stakeholder consultations across all regions and Fisheries Management Areas, ensuring representation of fishers, women, LGUs, and value chain actors, and used a working definition to define small-scale fishers as "fisherfolk in municipal and ancestral waters and vulnerable groups across the value chain." The vision, SEA Fishers 2025-2035, aims for "Sustainable and Equitably Accessed Small-Scale Fisheries with Empowered, Resilient, and Dignified Fisherfolk," serves as a governance guide for national/local governments, development partners, and fisherfolk. Stage 3- 'implementation' adopts a whole-of-government approach, leveraging Fisheries Management Area structures for rollout, with dedicated communication and results-based monitoring plans. Key challenges included jurisdictional complexities between BFAR and DILG, participant selection, scheduling constraints, political transitions, and diverse stakeholder perspectives, underscoring the NTWG's pivotal role in fostering ownership and navigating complexities through meticulous preparation and inclusive engagement.

## **5.4. NPOA-SSF implementation stage**

### **5.4.1. Overview of implementation of NPOA-SSF**

The **FAO team** presented the NPOA-SSF implementation stage (Stage 3), explaining its iterative cycle of review, prioritization, resourcing, and monitoring. They said that successful execution requires transitioning from development to action through structured steps: Step 3-0 (Review, Prioritize, and Resource) involves stakeholder meetings to assess capacity, align with existing government plans, mobilize donor resources, and confirm priority workstreams, for example, as demonstrated by Tanzania's phased approach integrating TAWFA chapters; Step 3-1 (Implementation Roles) assigns clear responsibilities, recommending a National Platform for oversight and a Fisheries Department-led Secretariat for coordination, exemplified by the Philippines' National Technical Working Group supervising implementation with multi-stakeholder engagement; Step 3-2 (Standard Operating Procedures) mandates documented processes using adaptable templates to ensure consistency; Step 3-3 (Information Management)

advocates for a centralized knowledge base housing tools, schedules, and best practices, requiring dedicated management; Step 3-4 (Communication) stresses sustained internal/external engagement, leveraging networks) for outreach; and Step 3-5 (Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning) employs results-based frameworks with quarterly/annual reporting and mid-term/final evaluations, using various tools (e.g/ the Philippines' LGU compliance assessments). Key success factors across countries included leadership commitment, multi-sectoral partnerships, institutionalized structures (e.g., National Task Teams), dedicated financing, and adaptive MEL systems, with critical messages underscoring government-driven implementation, SOP utilization, centralized information, continuous stakeholder consultation, and learning-oriented evaluation to ensure sustainable small-scale fisheries governance.

#### **5.4.2. NPOA-SSF Roadmaps for countries**

The session began with an overview of the implementation stage, referencing the earlier Philippines case study. The teams were then guided through questions to identify challenges, develop a roadmap, and set probable timelines. The key outcomes of the discussions from each country are elaborated in the following section.

##### **1) Bangladesh**

Bangladesh's NPOA-SSF roadmap is more than just a planning document; it is a comprehensive approach designed to systematically address the complex challenges facing small-scale fisheries through structured stakeholder engagement and targeted interventions. Representing Bangladesh, Shoukot Kabir Chowdhury outlined the roadmap's reliance on inclusive consultations across regions and stakeholder groups, facilitated through official communications and a proposed 17-member National Task Force representing government, fisher organizations, academia, and NGOs. This structured methodology breaks down ecological, economic, and social complexities into actionable components, with a clear timeline (October 2025–October 2026, adjusted for national elections) to guide implementation. The roadmap's strength lay in its multi-agency coordination, evidence-based drafting process, and alignment with international obligations, providing transparency and shared understanding to drive sustainable SSF development. Systematic stakeholder integration, defined working parameters (like the 5-ton capacity SSF-M definition), and phased milestones offer the necessary structure to prioritize actions and track progress toward long-term resilience and equity in Bangladesh's fisheries sector.

##### **2) India**

###### **Inland fisheries**

India's Inland NPOA-SSF roadmap constitutes a transformative framework addressing the multifaceted challenges confronting small-scale fishers through a rights-based, equity-driven approach. The intervention logic directly confronts systemic gaps, including insecure tenure rights, inadequate social protection, gender disparities, climate vulnerabilities, and inefficient value chains, by anchoring the plan in core objectives: assuring intergenerational food security, adopting sustainable practices, achieving climate justice, securing fishers' livelihoods, and recognizing traditional community rights. The roadmap prioritizes preferential support for women and marginalized groups while strengthening economic contributions across the value chain and

embedding human rights principles in governance. The team underscored that the National Task Force (NTF) will facilitate inclusive stakeholder consultations to co-create the NPOA-SSF, ensuring that diverse perspectives inform the drafting process. By integrating ecological resilience with social equity and economic viability, this structured approach enables actionable interventions that bridge policy gaps, enhance community agency, and align with international sustainability commitments. Amirthalingam and Suman, on behalf of the team, concluded that this holistic strategy, though complex, will provide the necessary foundation for equitable and climate-resilient inland fisheries governance in India.

### **Marine fisheries**

The roadmap takes cognizance of the escalating crisis in small-scale fisheries driven by anthropogenic pressures and climate change, which have depleted fish stocks, fuelled conflicts, and eroded livelihoods and social aspirations. Reversing this trend demands a dual focus, ecological restoration to boost resource availability and socio-economic equity to elevate fishers' status. The roadmap positions NPOA-SSF as a pivotal enabler to bridge critical gaps, strengthening ecological well-being while advancing social and financial inclusion. Its intervention logic centres on three pillars:

- Promoting sustainable livelihoods through resilient practices,
- Ensuring prudent resource management via conservation-aligned governance,
- Guaranteeing equitable access to resources, markets, social protection, and financial services, while securing tenure rights and empowering vulnerable groups, especially women.

The proposed 18–20-member National Task Force would integrate central/state agencies (DoF), fisher federations (NFSSF, NFF), post-harvest actors (SEWA), suppliers (SEAI), research bodies (CMFRI, CIFT), and NGOs (SIFFS, MSSRF). This multi-stakeholder coalition will guide phased implementation of the NPOA-SSF.

### **3) Maldives**

The roadmap establishes a holistic framework tailored to the archipelagic nation's unique context, addressing systemic gaps through three core pillars: ecological sustainability by balancing resource use with conservation, social equity via inclusive representation of all fishery types and vulnerable groups, and economic viability through strengthened value chains and market access. The proposed 22-member National Task Force would , integrate government agencies, private sector entities (processing companies and suppliers), research institutions (MMRI, MNU), NGOs, and critically, include direct fisher representation (8 members covering diverse fisheries). This multi-stakeholder coalition will drive phased implementation, NTF formation, strategic planning, iterative stakeholder consultations, NPOA-SSF drafting, and publication, while prioritizing contextual flexibility to adapt solutions across atolls.

### **4) Sri Lanka**

Sri Lanka's NPOA-SSF roadmap addresses the multifaceted crises facing small-scale fisheries amid post-conflict recovery and economic instability, targeting systemic gaps through four integrated pillars: securing tenure rights and social protection for fishers; ensuring sustainable

resource management to combat overexploitation; advancing gender justice and equity for vulnerable groups; and building climate-resilient value chains. The proposed 13-member National Task Force included government bodies (Ministry of Fisheries, Department of Fisheries, NAQDA), fisher organizations (National Fisheries Federation, cooperatives, women's groups), post-harvest actors (seafood processors), suppliers (ice, gear, boat providers), research institutions (universities), and NGOs (NAFSO, SFO, Pelagico). This coalition would drive the implementation process.

During the discussions, the countries agreed on a practical timeline to achieve the targets for each stage as presented in the table.

	Bangladesh	India-Inland	India-Marine	Maldives	Sri Lanka
I	<p><b>September – October 2025:</b> Workshop participants will conduct stakeholder mapping.</p> <p><b>November 2025:</b> The Fisheries Department will propose the NTF membership.</p> <p><b>21 November 2025:</b> The Fisheries Department will formally notify the NTF.</p>	<p><b>September – October 2025:</b> Workshop participants will conduct stakeholder mapping.</p> <p><b>November 2025:</b> The Fisheries Department will propose the NTF membership.</p> <p><b>21 November 2025:</b> The Fisheries Department will formally notify the NTF.</p>	<p><b>October 2025:</b> Stakeholder mapping will be conducted.</p> <p><b>November 2025:</b> The NTF will be proposed and formally notified.</p> <p><b>November – December 2025:</b> The National Platform will be created and notified</p>	<p><b>Stakeholder Mapping:</b> To take approximately 2 weeks.</p> <p><b>Propose NTF Membership:</b> To take approximately 1 month.</p> <p><b>Notify NTF:</b> To take approximately 1 week</p>	<p><b>September 2025:</b> Stakeholder mapping will be conducted, and workshop results will be relayed to the ministry.</p> <p><b>15 &amp; 20 October 2025:</b> The NTF will be proposed and formally notified.</p> <p><b>30 October 2025:</b> The NPOA-SSF National Platform will be established.</p> <p><b>1st Week of November 2025:</b> An inception meeting and characterization of SSF will take place</p>
II	<p><b>December 2025:</b> An inception meeting will be held, and capacity building for the NTF will be conducted.</p> <p><b>January 2026:</b> The NTF will complete a governance review and the IHH characterization matrix.</p> <p><b>February 2026:</b> The NTF will finalise the NPOA-SSF development plan</p>	<p><b>December 2025:</b> An inception meeting will be held, and capacity building for the NTF will be conducted.</p> <p><b>January 2026:</b> The NTF will complete a governance review and the IHH characterization matrix.</p> <p><b>February 2026:</b> The NTF will finalise the NPOA-SSF development plan</p>	<p><b>November 2025:</b> An inception meeting will take place.</p> <p><b>December 2025:</b> The NTF will undergo capacity building with support from BOBP and FAO.</p> <p><b>January 2026:</b> The NTF and NP will collaborate on a communication strategy, SSF characterization, and a governance review.</p> <p><b>March 2026:</b> The NPOA-SSF development plan will be finalised</p>	<p><b>Inception Meeting:</b> To take approximately 2 months.</p> <p><b>SSF Characterization:</b> To take approximately 2 months.</p> <p><b>Capacity Building of NTF:</b> To take approximately 3 months.</p> <p>Develop Communication Strategy &amp; Governance Review: Each to take approximately 1 month</p>	<p><b>21 November 2025:</b> The NTF will receive capacity building as part of World Fisheries Day events.</p> <p><b>December 2025:</b> A communication plan will be developed, and a governance review will be completed.</p> <p><b>2nd Week of January 2026:</b> The NPOA-SSF development plan will be created</p>

	Bangladesh	India-Inland	India-Marine	Maldives	Sri Lanka
III	<p>Development &amp; Consultation (March – September 2026)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>March 2026:</b> The public launch will take place, and the intervention logic and consultation materials will be prepared.</li> <li>● <b>April 2026:</b> The NPOA-SSF log frame will be developed, and drafting will commence.</li> <li>● <b>May 2026:</b> A "write-shop" will be held to finalise the draft.</li> <li>● <b>June – September 2026:</b> Extensive stakeholder consultations will be conducted</li> </ul>	<p>India-Inland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>March 2026:</b> The public launch will take place, and the intervention logic and consultation materials will be prepared.</li> <li>● <b>April 2026:</b> The NPOA-SSF log frame will be developed, and drafting will commence.</li> <li>● <b>May 2026:</b> A "write-shop" will be held to finalise the draft.</li> <li>● <b>June – September 2026:</b> Extensive stakeholder consultations will be conducted</li> </ul>	<p>India-Marine</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>April 2026:</b> The public launch of the process will be held.</li> <li>● <b>May – June 2026:</b> The intervention logic and consultation materials will be prepared, and consultations will begin.</li> <li>● <b>August 2026:</b> The NPOA-SSF will be drafted.</li> <li>● <b>September 2026:</b> A "write-shop" will be held to finalise the draft.</li> <li>● <b>October – December 2026:</b> The main phase of stakeholder consultations will occur</li> </ul>	<p>Maldives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Public Launch Preparation &amp; Event:</b> To take approximately 2 weeks for preparation and 2 months for the launch event itself.</li> <li>● <b>Develop NPOA-SSF Log Frame:</b> To take approximately 3 months.</li> <li>● <b>NPOA-SSF Drafting:</b> To take approximately 2 months.</li> <li>● <b>Stakeholder Consultations:</b> To take approximately 2 weeks.</li> </ul>	<p>Sri Lanka</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>February 2026:</b> The public launch of the process will be held.</li> <li>● <b>March 2026:</b> The intervention logic will be developed, and consultation materials will be prepared.</li> <li>● <b>April – May 2026:</b> The NPOA-SSF Log frame will be created.</li> <li>● <b>May – June 2026:</b> Drafting of the NPOA-SSF will occur.</li> <li>● <b>May – September 2026:</b> Stakeholder consultations will be conducted in the field</li> </ul>
IV	<p>Public And Launch (October – November 2026)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>October 2026:</b> The NPOA-SSF will be published.</li> <li>● <b>21 November 2026:</b> A formal launch event will be held.</li> <li>● <b>November 2026:</b> Planning for implementation and monitoring will begin.</li> </ul>	<p>India-Inland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>October 2026:</b> The NPOA-SSF will be published.</li> <li>● <b>21 November 2026:</b> A formal launch event will be held.</li> <li>● <b>November 2026:</b> Planning for implementation and monitoring will begin</li> </ul>	<p>India-Marine</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>January 2027:</b> The NPOA-SSF event will be held, and planning for implementation will commence</li> </ul>	<p>Maldives</p> <p>Timelines are TBD, and planning for implementation and monitoring will be determined during the development stage</p>	<p>Sri Lanka</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>November 2026:</b> The NPOA-SSF will be published.</li> <li>● <b>December 2026:</b> The official launch event will be held.</li> <li>● <b>2027:</b> Planning for implementation and monitoring will begin</li> </ul>

## 6. Plenary – Briefing to Member Countries & Discussion on Next Steps

### 6.1. Regional Roadmap for Development of NPOA-SSF: Role of FAO and BOBP-IGO

BOBP-IGO's regional roadmap for NPOA-SSF development catalyses country-led action through a structured, time-bound process, responding to member nations' mandate for accelerated progress, as explained by Dr. P. Krishnan. He outlined a three-phase approach: Phase 1 leverages FAO expertise to build capacity via manual walkthroughs, mock processes, and Philippines' experience sharing; Phase 2 deploys BOBP's catalytic support, including technical partnerships (FAO+), project synergies (BOBLME for EAFM/IUU, BIMReN for academic collaboration, BOBSAN for stock assessments), and resource mobilization (donor pitching, TCP exploration); and Phase 3 ensures sustained momentum through web-hosted knowledge hubs and progress reporting to the Governing Council. Urging "MISSION MODE STATUS," he advised National Task Forces to adopt snowballing consultations, address linguistic diversity, prioritize marginalized groups via FGDs, and embed processes within existing government programs for funding continuity. Dr. Krishnan stressed that success hinges on empowering community champions, integrating traders/processors to avoid friction, and activating sub-national governance, emphasizing that the roadmap's public resonance and media visibility must now translate into collective action. He concluded with a rallying cry: "Together, let us reform & transform the fisheries sector for a performing SSF!" and he affirmed BOBP's role as the region's "Timekeeper" in driving this transformation.

### 6.2. Statements from NPOA-IGO Member Countries on the Next Steps

#### 6.2.1. Bangladesh

**Mr. Abu Naim Muhammad Abdus Sabur, Joint Secretary**, Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, Bangladesh, emphasized that the workshop had greatly enhanced their understanding of small-scale fisheries, an area that had not previously received focused attention at the ministry level despite the existence of policy provisions. He highlighted that the member countries of BOBP-IGO-Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives share similar cultures, livelihoods, and a common marine ecosystem, making regional collaboration essential. He noted the importance of developing a clear definition of small-scale fisheries and acknowledged the diversity of contexts, and Bangladesh's dual marine and inland fisheries. He further stated that delegates would share the workshop's outcomes with higher authorities, including secretaries, advisors, and National Task Forces, and confirmed that the National Action Plan would be finalized by October 2026, with implementation to commence in November 2026. He described the workshop as highly participatory, informative, and valuable for shaping national action plans, and extended appreciation to FAO officials, participants, and high-level representatives from the member countries.

#### 6.2.2. India

**Dr Mohammed Koya, Fisheries Development Commissioner**, Department of Fisheries, Government of India, expressed his appreciation to BOBP-IGO for convening the workshop. India's fisheries, predominantly small-scale, are strongly supported by scientific research and significant government investment across marine, inland, aquaculture, and processing sectors. India is

developing guidelines on fishing gear marking and strengthening science-based interventions to enhance sustainability.

Dr Koya highlighted the Government of India's commitment to aligning the National Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries (NPOA-SSF) with FAO guidelines. A national task force, guided by experts including Dr. P. Krishnan, is already in place to steer this process. A national consultation focusing on legal aspects of SSF is planned within the next one to two months, building on a preliminary legal report. Existing government schemes and programs are aligned to support NPOA-SSF preparation and implementation, emphasizing sustainability, product quality, and the welfare of fishing communities. He stated that India aims to finalize its NPOA-SSF by September 2026, drawing lessons from other countries such as the Philippines. Dr. Koya also shared that India is developing a roadmap for NPOA-SSF, taking a systematic, science-based approach and following global benchmarks, including action plans for IUU fishing and sharks. He concluded by reaffirming India's commitment to learning from regional and international experiences to strengthen fisheries governance.

### **6.2.3. Maldives**

**Dr. Hussain Sinan, Director General,** Ministry of Fisheries, Maldives, said that fisheries management in the Maldives is viewed primarily as managing people and communities, rather than only resources, which is reflected in the country's Fisheries Act and Management Plan. He explained that the development of the NPOA-SSF would be aligned with the national fisheries master plan, with a focus on diversification, value addition, and cost efficiency, particularly important given the challenges of inter-island travel. He proposed using Fishermen's Day on 10 December as a launchpad for national consultations, bringing together fishers, exporters, processors, and policymakers. He also highlighted the importance of legal reviews and documents under development, and assured that they would be reviewed and finalized shortly. Looking ahead, he stressed the need to establish pilot initiatives under the BOBLME project, build synergies, and scale lessons learned to the national level. He concluded by reaffirming the Maldives' commitment to the regional process and appreciation for the participatory approach fostered by BOBP-IGO and FAO.

### **6.2.4. Sri Lanka**

Mr. Dhammika Ranatunga, Additional Secretary (Fisheries Resource Management) Ministry of Fisheries, Aquatic and Ocean Resources, Sri Lanka, expressed his appreciation to BOBP-IGO, FAO, government delegates, and community representatives for their commitment to developing a roadmap for the National Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries (NPOA-SSF). He highlighted the vital role of the small-scale fisheries sector in Sri Lanka's economic development, food and nutritional security, and livelihoods, noting that the country's new fisheries policy explicitly recognizes this importance. He emphasized that Sri Lanka is committed to implementing SSF Guidelines and sees the NPOA-SSF as critical to advancing this agenda. He informed participants that the new Fisheries Act, now in its final stages, will further empower small-scale fisheries by strengthening co-management committees, and that funds have already been allocated until 2026 to support and empower these committees. Sri Lanka will appoint a national task force including

state officials, fisheries communities, NGOs, processors, and other stakeholders to lead the process, with the aim of aligning the launch of the NPOA-SSF with World Fisheries Day later this year. Mr. Ranatunga underlined that Sri Lanka now has the policy, legal framework, and strong political will needed to strengthen the sector, reaffirming the government's full commitment to implementing the NPOA-SSF.

## **7. Closing Remarks and way forward**

### **7.1. Closing Remarks**

Ms. Lena Westlund expressed appreciation to the Governing Council members, senior officials, delegates, and colleagues from all participating countries for their active engagement over the course of the workshop. She noted the excellent progress achieved and the concrete plans developed to advance the National Plans of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries (NPOA-SSF) in the region.

She emphasized the importance of securing government support, implementing the NPOA-SSF in the spirit of the FAO Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines, and ensuring that the voices of fishers and fish workers, both men and women, are included in all stages of planning and implementation. Ms. Westlund highlighted the need for cross-sectoral collaboration, encouraging engagement with other line ministries, departments, and partners dealing with social development, economic development, and human rights to ensure holistic support for small-scale fishing communities.

Ms. Westlund reaffirmed the commitment of FAO and partner organizations to provide ongoing technical support and guidance, recognizing the efforts required to conduct consultations and integrate diverse stakeholder perspectives. She also acknowledged the critical support of BOBP-IGO in facilitating the workshop and the broader regional process.

She encouraged continued collaboration, noting the potential for the initiative to demonstrate regional solidarity and set an example for global best practices in sustainable small-scale fisheries management. She concluded by expressing optimism that, with sustained commitment and partnership, the participating countries could successfully implement the NPOA-SSF and strengthen the resilience, sustainability, and well-being of their fishing communities.

### **7.2. Way forward**

Dr. P. Krishnan, Director, BOBP-IGO, expressed his gratitude to the member countries and delegates for their strong support and contributions that made the workshop enriching and meaningful. He said that over the past decade, six National Plans of Action (NPOAs) for small-scale fisheries (SSF) had been developed globally, mostly spearheaded by FAO, with the Philippines being the only Asian country to have completed preparation of an NPOA. Globally, only one regional NPOA-SSF exists, for the Mediterranean. This underscores the significance of the current workshop and the commitment of member countries to advance NPOA-SSF development at both national and regional levels. The process originated from a high-level meeting in the Maldives focused on mainstreaming the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF) for small-scale fisheries. Senior officials from the four member countries participated, calling for the development of NPOAs in a time-bound manner. Following this, BOBP IGO's governing council passed a resolution to facilitate capacity development programs for countries to implement their plans.

FAO played a pivotal role in supporting the process, providing technical guidance, facilitating workshops, and enabling country delegations to actively engage in reviewing national limitations, interests, and provisional roadmaps. Delegates worked with country profiles, stakeholder mapping, IHH infographics, and legal reviews to assess national compliance with the help of FAO guidelines and tools.

Dr. Krishnan emphasized the aspirational goal of building on the Philippines' experience to speedily develop NPOAs that are more efficient and better delivered. He noted that the region benefits from favourable political and bureaucratic conditions, dedicated fisheries ministries, and ongoing national policy transformations. Regional projects, such as BOBLME and BIMReN, provide additional support, along with networks like BOBSAN, which advise on shared resources and technical issues. Key considerations include inclusivity and participation of marginalized groups, engagement of community leaders, fishers, traders, and processors, and ensuring active involvement at all administrative levels. The workshop demonstrated broad engagement from member countries, academia, research institutions, and government agencies, highlighting the importance of shared learning, experience exchange, and regional collaboration.

Timelines discussed during the workshop suggest that task forces can be established by October–December 2025, with capacity development beginning in November 2025. The development phase may start in January 2026 and conclude by September 2026, followed by implementation through 2028. The process is supported technically by FAO and regionally by BOPP-IGO facilitating stakeholder identification, workshop facilitation, methodology guidance, and dissemination of outcomes.

He said that the draft legal report, country profile, and IHH infographics had been reviewed during the workshop and were near finalization. These documents were expected to be published jointly with FAO and national governments after appropriate consultations and endorsements. He said that the workshop had strengthened regional collaboration and set a framework for developing inclusive, science-based, and actionable NPOAs for small-scale fisheries in member countries.

## Annexure I: Agenda

Time	Activity	Responsibility
Day 1 (17 September 2025)		
0830 - 0900	Registration	BOBP-IGO
0900 - 1000	Session I: Inaugural Session	
0900 - 0910	Welcome Address & Context and Background	Dr. P Krishnan Director, BOBP-IGO
0910 - 0930	Thematic Presentation: SSF Guidelines, global implementation progress and NPOA-SSF development process	Ms Lena Westlund International Fisheries Analyst, FAO, Rome
0930 - 0940	Guest of Honour	Dr J. K. Jena DDG (Fisheries), ICAR
0940 - 0955	Inaugural Address by the Chair, Governing Council of BOBP-IGO	Dr Abhilaksh Likhi, IAS Secretary (DoF), Gol
0955 - 1000	Vote of Thanks	BOBP-IGO
1000 - 1030	Group Photograph/ Refreshments	
1030 - 1230	Session II: SSF in BOBLME region This session will provide comprehensive presentations on the SSF sector in the region including the sector's characteristics, its geographical scope, ecosystems, scale, social and economic significance, actors and communities, fishery management and policy and legal framework. This will be followed by presentations on the policy priorities by each country. Each presentation will be followed by a Q&A session, providing participants with an opportunity to engage with the process.	Chair Bangladesh
1030 - 1130	Presentations on 1. SSF Profile of the countries - key findings from the region 2. Policy and legal diagnostics of BOBLME region	BOBP-IGO
1130 - 1230	National policy priorities for SSF sector (15 mins from each country)	Country Representatives
1230 - 1300	Plenary Q&A and discussion	BOBP-IGO
1300 - 1400	Lunch	
1400 - 1730	Session III: SSF Guidelines: Principles and factors to consider in NPOA-SSF development This session provides comprehensive presentations and examples from the region on the underlying principles of the SSF guidelines: [1] how SSF guidelines are designed to implement human rights-based approach (HRBA); [2] legal recognition of tenure rights, and sustainable resource management; [3] provisions for SSF communities	Chair India

Time	Activity	Responsibility
	<p>through fair employment, social protection, and capacity building; [4] strengthening small-scale fisheries value chains, improving post-harvest practices, and enhancing equitable access to markets and trade opportunities; [5] promoting gender equality by recognizing and empowering the roles of women and marginalized genders in small-scale fisheries across the value chain, and [6] building the resilience of small-scale fisheries to disaster risks and climate change through adaptation strategies, risk reduction measures, and community-based responses.</p> <p>Each presentation will be followed by a Q&amp;A session, providing participants with an opportunity to engage, seek clarifications, and share insights related to the implementation of the SSF Guidelines.</p>	
1400 – 1500	<p>SSF guidelines: Principles and Thematic Areas This presentation provides comprehensive presentations on how SSF guidelines are designed explaining the principles and thematic areas. The presentation will be followed by a Q&amp;A session.</p>	Ms Lena Westlund & Ms Ana Suarez FAO, Rome
1500 - 1530	<p>Responsible governance of tenure/ Sustainable resource management The presentation on sustainable resource management will highlight key learnings across the region from the BOBLME EAF project.</p>	Dr E. Vivekanandan BOBLME Consultant, BOBP-IGO
	<p>The tenure presentation will provide current status, challenges and examples from the region on tenure and resource management. The presentations will be followed by a Q&amp;A session.</p>	Ms Jasmine George Turning Tides
1530 – 1545	Refreshments	
1545 – 1600	<p>Social development, employment and decent work This presentation provides comprehensive overview of the regional action plan for fair employment and social protection for SSF communities. The presentation will be followed by a Q&amp;A session.</p>	Mr Rajdeep Mukherjee Policy Analyst, BOBP-IGO
1600 - 1620	<p>Value chains, post-harvest and trade This will feature two talks by fish processors on strengthening small-scale fisheries value chains, improving post-harvest practices, and enhancing equitable access to markets and trade opportunities.</p>	Mr Ganesh Nakhawa Founder & CEO – BLUCATCH  Ms Seetha Sivasubramaniam CSO, Sri Lanka
	<p>Gender equality This will feature videos on promoting gender equality by recognizing and empowering the roles of women and marginalized people in small-scale fisheries across the value chain, followed by a Q&amp;A session. Session outline below:</p>	Ms Manoela Militão de Siqueira Communication and Outreach Specialist, FAO, Rome

Time	Activity	Responsibility
	<p>6 minutes: Video (SSF Guidelines: Gender Equity and Equality)</p> <p>3 minutes: Instructions for group work</p> <p>25 minutes: Group work - Breaking down gender-based constraints in SSF value chains (mapping gender-based constraints within a value chain by focusing on the different nodes, the actors involved and potential actions required to address them in a gender-responsive/transformational way)</p> <p>6 minutes: Reporting back to plenary</p>	
1700 - 1730	<p>Disaster risks and climate change This presentation will provide an overview of the regional plan for building the resilience of small-scale fisheries to disaster risks and climate change through adaptation strategies, risk reduction measures, and community-based responses. The presentation will be followed by a Q&amp;A session.</p>	Dr P. Krishnan Director, BOBP-IGO
1730 - 1800	<p>Presentation on IHH approach, country infographics and SSF characterization approach This presentation will provide an overview of the IHH approach, present the country IHH infographics and characterization approach, its application and some examples. The presentation will be followed by a Q&amp;A session.</p>	Dr Maria del Mar Mancha Cisneros Michigan State University (Virtual)
1900 – 2100	Cultural & Networking Dinner	
Day 2 (18 September 2025)		
0900 - 1230	<p>Session IV. NPOA SSF process overview and deep dive on Initiation stage including tools and activities This session will include a presentation on the NPOA-SSF process and initiation stage followed by a working group session to apply the steps to each country's context. Finally, there will be a plenary sharing including Q&amp;A and discussion.</p>	Chair Sri Lanka
0900-0930	<p>NPOA-SSF Development Process Overview and Presentation on processes, tools and templates for initiation stage This presentation will provide an overview of the overall NPOA-SSF development process followed by a deep dive into the steps of the initiation stage including relevant templates. The presentation will be followed by a Q&amp;A session.</p>	Mr Rubén Sánchez Daroqui SSF Consultant FAO, Rome
0930 - 1030	<p>Working Group Session on Initiation Stage This working group session on the initiation stage will focus on applying the initiation steps to each country.</p>	Ms Manoela Militão de Siqueira

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
	Each group (by country) will apply the templates and review the technical documents provided in advance. These include drafting the nation task force membership and reviewing the outline ToRs, reviewing the SSF profile and IHH infographics including validation and key takeaways, planning for applying characterization approach to each country, stakeholder mapping and reviewing the SSF legal and policy	Communication and Outreach Specialist, FAO, Rome
1030 – 1045	Refreshments	
1045- 1145	Working Group Session on Intiation Stage (contd.)	Ms Manoela Militão de Siqueira Communication and Outreach Specialist, FAO, Rome
1145 - 1230	Plenary sharing by countries  The countries will share their key findings and snapshots of the key deliverables followed by Q&A and Discussion	Ms Rubén Sánchez Daroqui SSF Consultant FAO, Rome
1230 - 1330	Lunch	
1330 - 1600	Session V. Deep dive on Development stage including tools and activities  This session will include a presentation on the development stage, followed a presentation on the Philippines case, followed by a working group session to apply the steps to each country's context. Finally, there will be a plenary sharing including Q&A and discussion.	Chair Maldives
1330 - 1400	Presentation on Development stage This presentation will provide a deep dive into the steps of the development stage including relevant templates. The presentation will be followed by a Q&A session.	Mr Rubén Sánchez Daroqui SSF Consultant FAO, Rome
1400 - 1430	Presentation on the Philippines NPOA-SSF development process This presentation will provide a relevant example of how the NPOA-SSF was developed in the Philippines including the strategy for consultation approach. The presentation will be followed by a Q&A session.	Ms Rebeca Fontanilla Andong, Fisheries Specialist & National SSF, Project Coordinator FAO, Philippines
1430 - 1515	Working Group Session on Development Stage	Ms Manoela Militão de Siqueira Communication and Outreach Specialist, FAO, Rome
1515 - 1545	Plenary sharing by countries	Ms Manoela Militão de Siqueira

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
	The countries will share their key findings and snapshots of the key deliverables followed by Q&A and Discussion	Communication and Outreach Specialist, FAO, Rome
1545 - 1600	Refreshments	
1600 – 1715	Session VI: Deep dive on Implementation stage including tools and activities This session will include a presentation on the implementation stage followed by a working group session to reflect on challenges and opportunities during implementation. Finally, there will be a plenary sharing including Q&A and discussion	Chair Maldives
1600 – 1620	Presentation on Implementation stage This presentation will provide a deep dive into the steps of the implementation stage including relevant templates. The presentation will be followed by a Q&A session	Mr Varun Tandon International Fisheries Specialist, FAO, Rome
1620 – 1645	Reflection of the countries on potential challenges This session will focus on potential challenges and opportunities in NPOA-SSF development and implementation. Each country will discuss their reflections first and then share them in plenary	Mr Varun Tandon International Fisheries Specialist, FAO, Rome
1645 - 1715	Plenary sharing by countries  The countries will share their key findings followed by discussion	Varun Tandon International Fisheries Specialist, FAO, Rome
<b>Day 3 (19 September 2025)</b>		
1900 – 1200	Session VII: Roadmap Planning/Next steps This session will include a presentation on the NPOA-SSF roadmap planning followed by a working group session to draft roadmaps by country. Finally, there will be a plenary sharing including Q&A and discussion.	Ms Lena Westlund International Fisheries Analyst, FAO, Rome
0900 – 0915	Introduction to the preparation of a roadmap for NPOA-SSF This presentation will highlight the importance of developing a concrete roadmap for NPOA-SSF and outline how to build one, with illustrative examples.	Mr Varun Tandon International Fisheries Specialist, FAO, Rome
0915 – 1045	Working group session on NPOA-SSF roadmap preparation This working group session will focus on developing a NPOA-SSF roadmap of a roadmap on NPOA-SSF including who is involved, roles and responsibilities, key workstreams, initial kick-off activities, funding sources, milestones and timelines, risks and mitigants.	Mr Rajdeep Mukherjee Policy Analyst, BOBP-IGO
1045 – 1100	Refreshments	
1100 – 1200	Presentation of Roadmap on development of NPOA-SSF in plenary.	Mr Rubén Sánchez Daroqui

Time	Activity	Responsibility
	The countries will share their NPOA-SSF roadmaps followed by Q&A and discussion	SSF Consultant FAO, Rome
1200 – 1300	Session VIII: plenary – Briefing to member Countries & discussion on next Steps	
1200 – 1215	Regional roadmap for Development of NPOA-SSF	Dr P. Krishnan Director, BOBP-IGO
1215 – 1220	Release of SSF Country Profile and the Legal Report on NPOA SSF (Draft)	
1220 – 1250	Statements from BOBP-IGO Member Countries on the Next Steps	Senior Officials / National Delegates
1250 – 1300	Closing remarks	FAO & BOBP-IGO
1300 – 1400	Lunch	
1400 – 1800	Field Visit	

## Annexure II List of Participants

No.	Country/ Organization	Participants	Mobile/Email
<b>GUESTS at the INAUGURATION</b>			
1.	<b>Govt. of India</b>	<b>Dr. Abhilaksh Likhi, IAS,</b> Secretary, Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Krishi Bhawan, New Delhi – 110001.	secy-fisheries@gov.in
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