

## **Report on the Knowledge Café event**

### **“Marine Governance: Reflections on conservation, sea access rights and social and cultural resilience”<sup>i</sup>**

**(Session 0272)**

**IUCN World Conservation Congress**

**10 September 2012**

#### **Background**

For more than two years, CoopeSoliDar R.L.<sup>1</sup>, with different small-scale fishing organizations and federations from the Central American region, have been designing and opening spaces for the participation of small-scale fishing communities in marine conservation, local development and sustainable resource use initiatives and decision-making spaces at local, regional and international level. The goal has been to make visible the voices of these actors, sensitize to the challenges faced by small-scale fishworkers and promote solutions. CoopeSoliDar R.L. with small-scale fishing organizations have also promoted the participation of youth, noting that the youth of coastal communities in Mesoamerica and the Caribbean have much to contribute in discussions and practices of marine conservation, responsible use of resources and local development.

The first gathering of young representatives from small-scale fishing communities in the region took place in February 2012 in the city of Managua Nicaragua, under the regional civil society consultation process of FAO’s Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries with the support of the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF).

Later, CoopeSoliDar R.L. asked the small-scale fishing organizations of the region, that participated in the FAO consultation, to nominate young representatives that could participate in a process towards the World Conservation Congress, Jeju, Korea 2012. With the support of IUCN Regional Office for Mesoamerica, CEESP and CEESP Youth Network, seven young representatives of the region that were nominated by their organizations met in Costa Rica in June 2012 for a discussion workshop. This event

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<sup>1</sup> CoopeSoliDar R.L. ([www.coopesolidar.org](http://www.coopesolidar.org)) is a cooperative of professionals working on initiatives that build bridges between conservation and development, focusing on the well-being of local communities.



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allowed identifying key issues and the key messages that the young local representatives would take to the World Conservation Congress. Also, a youth virtual communication network, called *Young Artisanal Fishers Union of Mesoamerica and the Caribbean*, was created.

The process culminated in bringing seven young representatives from the Mesoamerican region to the World Conservation Congress. These included Gamaliel García Alvarado from Mexico; Mynor Bautista Carrillo, from Guatemala; Franklin Gómez Quevedo from Honduras; Rosa Sandoval de Zepeda from El Salvador; Erick Isaacs Jarquín from Nicaragua; and Laura Morales Rojas and Gilberto Naranjo from Costa Rica.

### Objectives of the Knowledge Cafe

The basis of the knowledge cafe Congress event was to deepen reflections on the key relationship between social and cultural resilience and marine conservation, from the perspectives and experiences of young fishworkers of the artisanal fishing sector in the Mesoamerican region. Specific objectives included:

- Share the messages of youth of the region, their stories, experiences and visions.
- Make visible marine conservation efforts that foster communities' strengths (their identity, culture, knowledge, social forms of organization) and the responsible use of resources, from a vision of equity, human rights and mutual responsibility.
- Strengthen the emerging leadership of small-scale fisherfolks of the region.
- Explore the experiences of the participants and share concrete examples to build common aspirations for the future of marine conservation.
- Contribute towards a possible framework of common objectives that can contribute to connect marine conservation and human wellbeing, through the values of equity, human rights, governance, responsibilities and the rescue of cultural identity.

### Themes of discussion and issues identified by the young representatives

- Human rights and improvement of opportunities
- Marine governance and participation in decision-making spaces
- Responsible fishing practices
- Rights to land and coastal marine areas



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- Knowledge generation
- Contribution to the economy
- Drug trafficking and other social threats
- Climate Change

### ***Results on the discussions of the Knowledge Café***

#### **Human rights and improvement of opportunities**

Youth agreed that emphasis should be placed on gender equity and on strengthening efforts for the sustainable use of marine resources within the small-scale fishing sector.

In the case of El Salvador, women use resources in many ways: some fish with nets, whilst others extract molluscs and conch. In the region there are women who fish in different water ecosystems, including the sea and lakes, and there are women who dive.

However, at least in El Salvador, fishers do not have the right to social security, nor access to life insurance-- despite the risks involved in the fishing activity. Many women in the region want to have better opportunities. Some want to continue their studies, while others want to be fishers. The limited access to education in coastal rural communities was emphasized as a limitation. While the need to access other sources of employment, such as ecotourism, was emphasized, the lack of training and capacity building was pointed out also as a limitation.

Another challenge expressed was the limited access to credit and the need for a legal framework that could allow and promote this access.

Among the issues to consider in this subject the following were presented:

- Promote differentiated access to opportunities for men and women, according to their needs as a way to promote gender equity.
- Strengthen the organizations of men and women.
- Ensure access to natural resources and fishing areas.
- Ensure access to credit and social security.

#### **Marine governance and participation in decision-making spaces**

Young people stressed that they are the most affected stakeholders in marine fortress conservation initiatives. Participants noted that there were limited spaces and opportunities for participation in these areas of decision-making. The young generations are not only the future, but also the present and must be recognized as important actors



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for change at different levels. In Central America young fisherfolk have a strong link with their communities and with the fishing activity. The young generations do not intend to leave their communities but rather learn and support development in their territories.

It was mentioned that in Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Honduras, the conservation laws and policies severely impact small-scale fisherfolk. Yet, decision-makers do not listen to fisherfolks, and fail to integrate and enable their participation in the various marine governance models that are implemented by conservation initiatives in the region.

### Drug trafficking and other social threats

The discussion focused on the decline of the fisheries resources and the limited opportunities to access other sources of employment by people in fishing communities. In this difficult socio-economic situation, drug trafficking can be seen as an alternative, but in fact threatens the well-being and human dignity of these communities.

The young representatives raised the need to access new local development opportunities, such as rural small-scale tourism; open spaces and actions that promote innovation and proactivity; and spaces to share lessons learned and experiences.

The discussions also highlighted the need to raise this issue, and tackle it in development cooperation and marine conservation initiatives to allow communities to confront drug trafficking and the related social problems.

### Responsible fishing practices

*"We cannot talk about Responsible Fishing if there is no fish in our oceans"*

The young participants shared different experiences in the region, highlighting two recommendations to promote responsible fishing:

- The need to think of a vision that integrates watershed and ecosystem based management and "think of the people who live above (inland)".
- To adopt the principles of FAO's Code for Responsible Fisheries and support to small-scale fisheries.

Additionally, young people can promote significant changes to move towards responsible fishing practices, while the organization of fisherfolks (or fisherfolk organizations) is essential to achieve changes and promote resource responsible use.



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The discussion suggested that artisanal fisheries are the sector closest to responsible fisheries, but it was agreed that Responsible Fishing couldn't be discussed if there is no fish in our oceans.

*“Young people can have a positive impact on changes for responsible fishing practices, for this the organization of the small-scale fishing sector is the key”*

### Rights to land and coastal marine areas

The problems of access to land and resources that young fisherfolk and fishworkers have observed and experienced in their communities were shared.

Three elements stand out from the discussions:

1) The implementation of regulatory plans for territorial planning that are promoting evictions of fishing communities from their lands, and affecting their rights of access to resources, land and their right to work. While the governments prioritize mass tourism development, local communities suffer the consequences of this displacement. This situation is being experienced in Costa Rica, Honduras and Nicaragua.

2) Aquaculture in Honduras raises issues of access to the sea and fishing grounds, and has caused conflicts and human assassinations. The young representative from Honduras shared that over the weekend an artisanal fisherman in his country was assassinated as a result of such conflict.

3) Science and protected areas versus local coastal communities: in Guatemala, scientific stations and biological corridors are promoting the eviction of communities from their land and causing fishing restrictions.

### Knowledge Generation

From El Salvador, the importance of ethical research processes was raised, pointing out that communities should be informed and know about research processes being carried out by external agents, and that local actors must have access to the research results. In this way access to information and accountability is promoted, while communities can face situations affecting them and affecting their access to the sea and resources more effectively.

The fact that often institutions and researchers use research processes for their own benefit and interests was raised. Unethical research practices that do not involve communities in the process were denounced as bad practices.



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Fisherfolk and fishworkers do not often have the appropriate access to information to enable them to understand and/or make decisions regarding the development and/or conservation measures or policies that are being promoted, by the governments or organizations, in their communities and in their traditional fishing grounds.

The young representatives stressed the following points:

- Research results should be shared and revised with the local communities.
- Research should be conducted with the participation of fisherfolk and fishworkers (the case of CoopeTárcoles R.L. and the Responsible Fishing Area of Tárcoles, Costa Rica is shared as a good example where the local artisanal fisherfolk keep a local database and are participating in monitoring and research).
- The importance of local knowledge is highlighted and the youth representatives underlined the importance of intergenerational sharing where the youth learns from the adults from actions and practices.

### Climate Change

The discussion centered on the various changes that are taking place and that have been experienced by the young participants in their coastal communities: changes in the water sources, ocean temperature, higher tides affecting houses and infrastructure along the coast, changes in rivers and streams and increased flooding, among others.

Young people say that the only way to tackle climate change is based on adaptation. The following specific actions were raised:

- 1) Education for adaptation
- 2) Training and capacity-building in production of alternative livelihood sources of fisheries (e.g. aquaculture)
- 3) Changes in the construction of homes and local infrastructure

### Contribution to the economy

The young representatives highlighted the economic contribution of the small-scale fishing sector to the economies in their own countries and at the local level. The fact that artisanal fisheries play an important role in local community consumption, and in national and international markets was stressed. The participants noted the following trends in their own communities: in the case of Honduras, over 98% of the catch is commercialized, whilst 2% of the total catch is consumed as a food source in coastal



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communities. In the case of Costa Rica, it is estimated that 60% is sold directly in the local market, 15% is sold to export, 15% for the national market and 10% for local consumption. In the case of El Salvador, fishery resources played a greater role for local community consumption.

The following points were recognized as important with respect to markets, commercialization and trade:

- 1) Fish resources contribute to the local domestic economy, and to the national economy. They are products that are also exported. Also, fishery resources contribute significantly to the food security and food sovereignty of fishing communities.
- 2) Direct commercialization of fish products by the artisanal fisher sector should be promoted.
- 3) The organization of artisanal fisherfolk in different organizational structures, such as cooperatives, should be promoted.

### ***What is our message to the IUCN World Conservation Congress?***

Four specific messages were developed and discussed:

- 1) Open up spaces and increase opportunities for the participation of youth from small-scale fishing communities in international forums and global congresses.
- 2) Open up spaces for the exchange of concrete and positive experiences (among youth and among youth and adults) in small-scale fishing communities.
- 3) Promote access to information at all levels and in the local languages.
- 4) Promote a new approach and vision for marine conservation that integrates the following aspects: the sustainable use of marine resources, access to decision-making spaces by local actors of the small-scale fisheries sector and the improvement of livelihoods of small-scale fishing communities as an integral part of marine conservation work.



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**Knowledge Café Organized by**

**CoopeSoliDar R.L.**

**CEESP and CEESP Youth**

**ICSF**

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ACRA- Nicaragua

CODDEFAGOLF- Honduras

CoopeTárcoles R.L.-Costa Rica

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## Main messages from the youth of coastal communities in Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean

### "Marine Governance: Reflections on conservation, access rights to the sea and social and cultural resilience"

#### 1) Human rights and improvement of opportunities

- Ensure gender equity and opportunity equality for the coastal-marine communities of the region.
- Recognize the contributions of young artisanal fisherfolk of Mesoamerica and the Caribbean to artisanal fishing and livelihoods.
- Promote higher education in coastal fishing communities.

#### 2) Marine governance and participation in decision-making spaces

##### *Recognizing the depletion of coastal marine ecosystems and coastal livelihoods,*

- Promote greater openness and participation of young fisherfolk from Mesoamerica and the Caribbean in governance models that contribute to improving marine conservation and livelihoods.
- Promote the active participation of youth and women from the fisheries sector in livelihood activities and decision-making processes.

#### 3) Responsible fishing practices

- Create opportunities for capacity building in responsible fishing practices and open spaces for self-improvement
- Promote efforts to conserve endangered species
- Find alternative practices that allow the continuation of shrimp fishing, without depleting non-targeted species
- Promote and encourage responsible fishing world-wide

#### 4) Rights to land and coastal marine areas

- Show the displacement of young fisherfolk from their coastal- marine areas, due to the lack of recognition of their territorial rights, large-scale tourism and real estate development.



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## 5) Knowledge generation

- Recognize the value of local knowledge, especially that of the youth that practice artisanal fishing in all indigenous peoples and local communities.

## 6) Contribution to the economy

- Recognize the contribution that young people make to local and national economies, and their contributions to food security

## 7) Drug trafficking and other social threats

- Address the vulnerability of youth in Central America and Mexico to the threat of drug trafficking in coastal fishing areas

## 8) Climate Change

- Find new alternative modes of survival that allow us to adapt to climate change and other threats.



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