

*Masifundise Development Trust  
'Coast to Coast: South African Women in Fisheries'  
Oatlands, Simonstown 8-10 April 2008*



*Women in Fisheries Small-scale Fishing  
Policy Statement*

**We, the undersigned women leaders representing women from 16 small-scale fishing communities in the Northern and Western Cape provinces, gathered at the Masifundise Women in Fisheries Workshop in Simonstown, from the 8<sup>th</sup> 10<sup>th</sup> April 2008:**

**Noting**

That women living and working in traditional fishing communities have historically played a very significant role in the development of the fishing industry in South Africa, as well as in the sustenance of our coastal communities, our families and their livelihoods. Women have historically been involved in fisheries in many different ways, harvesting a variety of marine resources for local consumption as well as for the market. Much of the work that women have done in the past, and continue to do, is not visible, nor is it regarded as valuable. Society tends to assume that the term 'fisher' refers to a fisherman, and women's role and their contribution to the fisheries is seldom recognised.

**Noting**

That Apartheid affected many Black communities that depended on the sea for their livelihoods. However, for many of these communities their access to marine resources has been further restricted through the introduction of the new fishing rights policies which have been geared towards the big commercial companies and not the traditions of these small scale communities.

**Noting**

That many women have lost their male partners and breadwinners at sea, with no compensation or financial support available to them

**Noting**

That many women from coastal fishing communities have worked as seasonal workers in the fish processing plants, working long hours under extremely harsh, icy conditions and most have suffered chronic health problems as a result of this work, with no compensation or adequate health care.

Many mothers and fathers having to work long hours in the fishing industry, many children were forced to leave school at an early age and take care of each other. This resulted in low formal education levels in many communities and has contributed towards social and economic hardship in these areas.

**Noting**

The provisions contained in CEDAW, Agenda 21, the Beijing Platform of Action and the Millenium Goals and that the South African government has ratified these international legal instruments, and, noting the provisions for equality in our Constitution, we strongly assert our right to participate equally and effectively in the development of a new small scale fisheries policy for South Africa and our right to benefit equally from this policy.

In order to achieve this we request that there be a woman representative from fishing communities on the National Policy Task Team.

**Our Vision**

Our vision is a sustainable, gender equitable small scale fisheries in which the well being and livelihoods of our fishing and coastal communities and marine ecosystem is secured. Women and men in these fishing communities are empowered to participate effectively in policy making and co management of the near shore resources. Support is provided by local, provincial and national government to ensure that this sector is able to contribute to the growth and development of vibrant local economies based on the principles of social justice, participatory democracy, sustainable marine resource utilization, poverty eradication and food security.

## **Policy Objectives**

The Small Scale Fisheries Policy must have the following objectives:

1. To give formal, legal recognition and protection to all traditional small scale fishers in South Africa in accordance with international and national commitments and legal instruments;
  2. To ensure the social and economic sustainability of the small scale fishing sector;
  3. To protect traditional livelihoods and enhance the food security and social development of the small scale fishing sector;
  4. To promote the environmental sustainability of the Marine and Coastal environments;
1. To ensure fishing and coastal communities' participation in policy development and integrated coastal resource management.

This policy includes all women and men small scale fishers harvesting in the near or 'in shore' zone ranging from those that fish primarily to feed their families on a subsistence basis to those who fish for an income on a small scale. It also includes all those who have been involved in activities directly linked to the fisheries, such as women who do pre and post harvesting work. It must also include those who use marine resources traditionally for pharmaceutical, health, spiritual, cultural or artistic purposes.

An overarching policy must be developed for the small scale sector that sets out the guiding principles for this policy and then regionally specific management plans will be adopted that address the specific species, conditions and practices in that region. It is accepted that this process of finalizing and then preparing for implementation is an incremental one and each step will build on the preceding one. Continuous reflection and evaluation will be required in order to monitor and evaluate the appropriateness of the policy as it is implemented in each area and the regional management plans will require adjustments to local needs and specificities. The policy must specifically be evaluated in terms of the impact on women in fisheries.

## Principles

- The small scale policy is based on the principles of equality, basic human rights, and participatory democracy through co management, sustainable marine resource utilization and poverty eradication.
- The small scale fisheries policy recognizes the rights of small scale fishers to practice their traditional livelihoods and to have preferential access to marine resources in the areas where they have harvested these resources for generations;
- The culture and traditions of the small scale sector are recognised, valued and protected, including specifically the roles that women have played in this sector;
- The indivisibility of socio-economic rights from fishers' rights is recognised and government adopts measures to protect and promote the rights of these fishing communities through co-operative governance and a developmental approach;

## Implementation activities and processes

In the first phase of the policy development process agreement should be reached on the broad principles and objectives identified above. Once this has been done, the Department needs to begin to put specific **Institutional Mechanisms** in place for the successful implementation of the policy.

- Power and decision – making will need to be devolved to local level. The necessary legislative and policy amendments must be made in order to secure co-operative governance on marine resource management and power devolved to local government structures and local co management committees.
- Specific inter and intra-departmental processes need to be established to ensure that DEAT's mandate to promote access to sustainable coastal livelihoods is integrated with local economic development and the functions of the local co-management committees.
- MCM must establish a strong, well integrated and capacitated Small Scale Fisheries and Coastal Livelihoods Unit, with sufficient financial and human resources, that provides high quality research and support to the fishing and coastal communities at local level in each region. The MCM Small Scale Fisheries Unit should have specific capacity to address women in fisheries issues.

- A Women in Fisheries Desk should be established in every local authority. This Desk will act as a catalyst for local development and ensure that women from fishing communities participate in and benefit from the fisheries and other coastal management development programmes.

Provincial and local level processes need to be facilitated so that regional specific management plans can be developed.

The outcomes of these processes must be made accessible to the local communities in their own languages.

Once this **first phase** has been completed, the following **outcomes** should be secured in the roll out of the policy through the regionally specific management plans:

- Small scale fishers should have access to a variety of marine resources and harvest according to the 'basket' approach, within a locally defined area, known as a Territorial User Rights in Fisheries framework (TURF),
- Government should take active steps to protect marine resources from over harvesting by commercial and recreational fishing interests and to prioritise the livelihoods of small scale fishing communities and their access to sustainable marine resources;
- The local fishers must participate actively in co managing marine resources through the establishment of Local Co Management Committees (LCMC). There is devolution of decision making powers to these local co management committees and MCM has sufficient local level capacity to participate actively at this level. There should be 50/50 representation of men and women on these committees. These co management committees are provided with training and capacity building and are empowered to engage effectively in the management of the resources and in enhancing the development of the local marine economy. Representatives from these Local Co Management Committees participate in annual regional and national monitoring, evaluation and review meetings of the small scale fisheries sector;
- MCM provides active support to the Local Co Management Structures in the form of joint research and assistance in ensuring capacity for monitoring at local level;
- Local Government is represented on co management structures at district level and actively supports the development of fishing communities and the sustainable utilization and marketing of marine resources to the benefit of these communities,
- A community based rights approach is accepted and ensures that the values of a nurturing, caring community are entrenched in decisions at local level. Through this approach local communities decide on the allocation of rights to fishers at local level. The needs of elderly fishers in receipt of a pension, children, the

youth and women are thus accommodated through this approach at community level. A local community can decide on the transferability of a permit on the death of a fisher;

- The value of the local knowledge of these fishing communities is acknowledged and integrated with fisheries science knowledge systems in management decision making. Women should be involved in local research initiatives that utilize their knowledge of the resources and of their communities.
- Where feasible, methods of rehabilitating marine resources are supported and government provides communities with the necessary information, technical and financial inputs to promote the sustainability of these stocks;
- The socio-economic rights of children are recognised and prioritized at local level through co-operative governance actions that ensure that children currently dependant on harvesting of marine resources for food security are enabled to go to school and their families have alternative sources of food security.
- The rights of small scale fishing communities living in or adjacent to Marine Protected Areas are respected and these communities participate in the management of these areas and enjoy equal benefits from these areas;
- Women's role and rights are recognised and valued and women are empowered to participate actively in both the co management of resources as well as in a range of harvesting and pre and post harvest activities. In addition, women must be able to choose whether or not they wish to go to sea themselves.
- Government adopts measures to assist fishing communities to engage successfully in sustainable coastal livelihoods. These livelihoods must not be considered 'alternative' to these fishing communities enjoying their traditional fishing rights. DEAT and Marine and Coastal Management must have effective, fully functioning institutional mechanisms for integrating supplementary and where required, alternative livelihood needs, with the mandates of other spheres of government. The specific needs of women must be addressed through integrating the work of DEAT, Department of Social Development and other departments with a mandate to promote development.
- The labour rights of small scale fishers are recognised, protected and promoted. These fishers are therefore protected by Basic Conditions of Employment. A social security system is in place to support their partners and family members of those fishers who lose their lives at sea or those who are disabled or unable to work due to sickness.
- Marketing and access to credit and finance for the small scale fishing sector is facilitated so that they are able to engage in marketing on a local, national and global level if they choose. Specific steps must be taken to ensure that women get

access to finance and marketing support for the range of coastal livelihood activities that they are engaged in.

- Training and skills development for fishing communities, particularly targeting women and youth, is actively promoted. This includes how to add value to the small scale fisheries sector as well as how to access and integrate diverse livelihood strategies such as eco-tourism and sustainable, community based aquaculture projects.

**Simonstown, 10 April 2008**