Advances in the study of working conditions in the shrimp and groundfish fisheries of the Guianas-Brazil Shelf

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Decent work assessment of Guyana, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago
OVERVIEW

- Introduction
- Overview of decent work in fisheries
- Approach
- Key findings
- Recommendations
The shift towards more socially responsible practices is driven largely by violations of human and labor rights in the sector. Civil and political (CP) rights, Economic, social, and cultural (ESC) rights.
Fisheries management or interventions that undermine human and labor rights or are inequitable can hinder environmental and socio-economic sustainability efforts.
Promoting decent work is an important strategy for equitable fisheries management.
WHAT IS DECENT WORK?
The International Labor Organization (ILO) defines decent work as **productive work for women and men in conditions of freedom, equity, security, and human dignity.**
The right to decent work is a **human right** and a driver for sustainable development, linked to several SDGs.
DECENT WORK IN FISHERIES

- There is no comprehensive framework or guidance specific to the sector.
- ILO Work in Fishing Convention (C188) sets standards for vessels at sea.
- Limited attention to ESC and women’s rights.
DECENT WORK IN FISHERIES – ADDITIONAL INSTRUMENTS

- The Monterey Framework for Social Responsibility, and the associated protocol
- FAO’s Voluntary Guidelines for SSF
- ILO Guidelines on Occupational Safety and Health
- FAO’s Voluntary Guidelines
MONTEREY FRAMEWORK

PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS, DIGNITY, AND ACCESS TO RESOURCES

ENSURE EQUALITY AND EQUITABLE OPPORTUNITY TO BENEFIT

IMPROVE FOOD AND LIVELIHOOD SECURITY

+ No human trafficking or forced labor
+ No child labor
+ Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining
+ Acceptable earnings, benefits, and hours of work
+ Adequate occupational safety and health standards
+ Stakeholder participation and collaborative management
+ Equitable opportunity to benefit
+ Equality and non-discrimination
+ Food security
+ Social protection
+ No Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing

DEFINING DECENT WORK IN FISHERIES
DECENT WORK IN THE SHRIMP AND GROUND FISH FISHERIES
The shrimp and groundfish fisheries are critical to food security, the economy, and social well-being. As a major employer and contributor to income for men, women, and migrant workers, the fisheries support almost 20,000 livelihoods in harvesting, processing, and retail operations.
A worker-centric approach is imperative.
First comprehensive assessment of working conditions in the fisheries.

- Highlights progress and areas of improvement.
- Initiates a broader conversation around human and labor rights.
1. **Desk-based review** of relevant international legal frameworks, domestic laws, and common practices for the fisheries sector.

2. **Semi-structured, remote interviews** with representatives from the government; subregional, regional, international and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs); non-governmental organizations (NGOs); employers including vessel owners; fishers and fishworkers.
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DESK-BASED FINDINGS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relevant conventions and agreements for workers in the fisheries sector</th>
<th>Ratifications</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188)</td>
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<td>Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)</td>
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<td>Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105)</td>
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<td>Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)</td>
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<td>Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)</td>
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<td>Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention, 1948 (No. 87)</td>
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<td>Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98)</td>
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<td>Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 (No. 154)</td>
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<td>Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)</td>
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*Table 1. Ratifications by country of relevant conventions and agreements to work in the fisheries sector.*
Women dominate post-harvest operations and are essential for food security.

Recent gender assessments provided important gender-disaggregated data.
Migrant workers are particularly vulnerable to exploitation.

Guyanese fishers make up a significant portion of the Surinamese workforce.
COUNTRY LEVEL FINDINGS
GUYANA

- Trafficking of persons (Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago)
- Cases of debt bondage
- Less than 50% of the artisanal fleet is registered.
Predominantly Guyanese workforce presents challenges for engagement, enforcement, and safety.

High number of landings taken to Guyana.
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

- EU yellow card – IUU fishing (2017)
- Cases of trafficking and forced labor on board foreign vessels in territorial waters.
REGIONAL FINDINGS
SHARED CHALLENGES

1. Widespread IUU fishing
2. Inadequate safety and health standards
3. Limited engagement with fishers and fishworkers
ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED, AND UNREGULATED (IUU) FISHING

- IUU fishing is linked to human and labor rights violations.
- Characterized by unregistered vessels, fishing outside territorial waters, and undocumented migrant labor.
ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED, AND UNREGULATED (IUU) FISHING

“We’re allowed to do it.”
Safety and standards vary.
Limited monitoring and enforcement.
“The safety standards exist only on paper.”
“The relationship is growing. I mean, it had hiccups. Fishermen can be very harsh, and they probably do feel that they're not really engaged in the process of decision making as much as they could be. I agree. We have a long way to go in terms of getting that kind of collaborative arrangements where we can actually manage their fisheries and change their mindset in terms of being more sustainably managing or oriented - We have to get there.”
SHARED CHALLENGES - UNDERLYING DRIVERS

- Ratification versus implementation.
- Perceived illegitimacy of local and regional laws → low compliance.
THE PATH TOWARDS DECENT WORK...
Resources and labor are transnationally linked.

Need for equivalency and consistency.

Recommendation: An intergovernmental taskforce
FORMALIZE THE FLEET

- Addressing widespread IUU fishing must be prioritized.

- **Recommendations:**
  - Vessel registration
  - Address dual license system (Guyana and Suriname)
  - Identification for migrant workers and/or written work agreements
INCREASE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Recommendations:

- Co-management
- Leverage existing cooperatives and support the development of new organizations.
HUMAN AND LABOR RIGHTS EDUCATION

Recommendations:

- Training for agencies, officers, and employers on labor rights, safety and health, and equitable engagement.
- Training for workers on rights at work, terms of employment, and safety and health.
C188 establishes minimum standards for work onboard vessels.

Opportunity to set a standard for the entire region.
The right to decent work is a right that belongs to every fisher and fishworker.

Guyana, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago are positioned to advance decent work, defining and improving social and labor standards, and actively participating in the global conversation around decent work in the fisheries sector.
THANK YOU
Photos courtesy of Annalise Bayney and Gabrielle Lout
References upon request