

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

Prepared by Gabrielle Lout for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
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OVERVIEW

- ≡ Introduction
- ≡ Overview of decent work in fisheries
- ≡ Approach
- ≡ Key findings
- ≡ Recommendations




HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

- ≡ 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.




The background image shows a harbor scene with several small fishing boats. In the foreground, there are several blue and black outboard motors mounted on the sterns of the boats. Two men are visible: one in a yellow shirt and black shorts is standing on a boat, and another in a purple shirt and patterned shorts is walking on a wooden pier. The water is calm, and the sky is not visible.

Promoting decent
work is an
important strategy
for equitable
fisheries
management.

A group of people are pushing a large, blue and red boat on a dirt beach. The boat is tilted upwards, and several people are visible pushing it from behind. A red bicycle is parked on the left. In the background, there are buildings and a clear blue sky. A semi-transparent dark box with white text is overlaid in the center of the image.

WHAT IS DECENT WORK?

The background image shows a group of people, likely of South Asian descent, standing near a body of water. In the foreground, a person is wearing a red long-sleeved shirt and dark pants. To their right, another person is wearing a light-colored, possibly white, shirt. The water is visible in the upper right, and some green vegetation is on the right side. The overall scene suggests a coastal or riverbank setting.

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.



The background of the slide is a faded, semi-transparent image of a fishing boat's deck. Several people, likely fishermen, are visible working on the deck. One person in the foreground is wearing a white cap and a light-colored shirt. The image is slightly out of focus, emphasizing the text in the foreground.

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.

The background of the slide is a faded, semi-transparent image of a fishing boat's deck. Several people are visible, some wearing hats and work clothes, engaged in various tasks. The image is slightly out of focus, emphasizing the text in the foreground.

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

MONTEREY FRAMEWORK



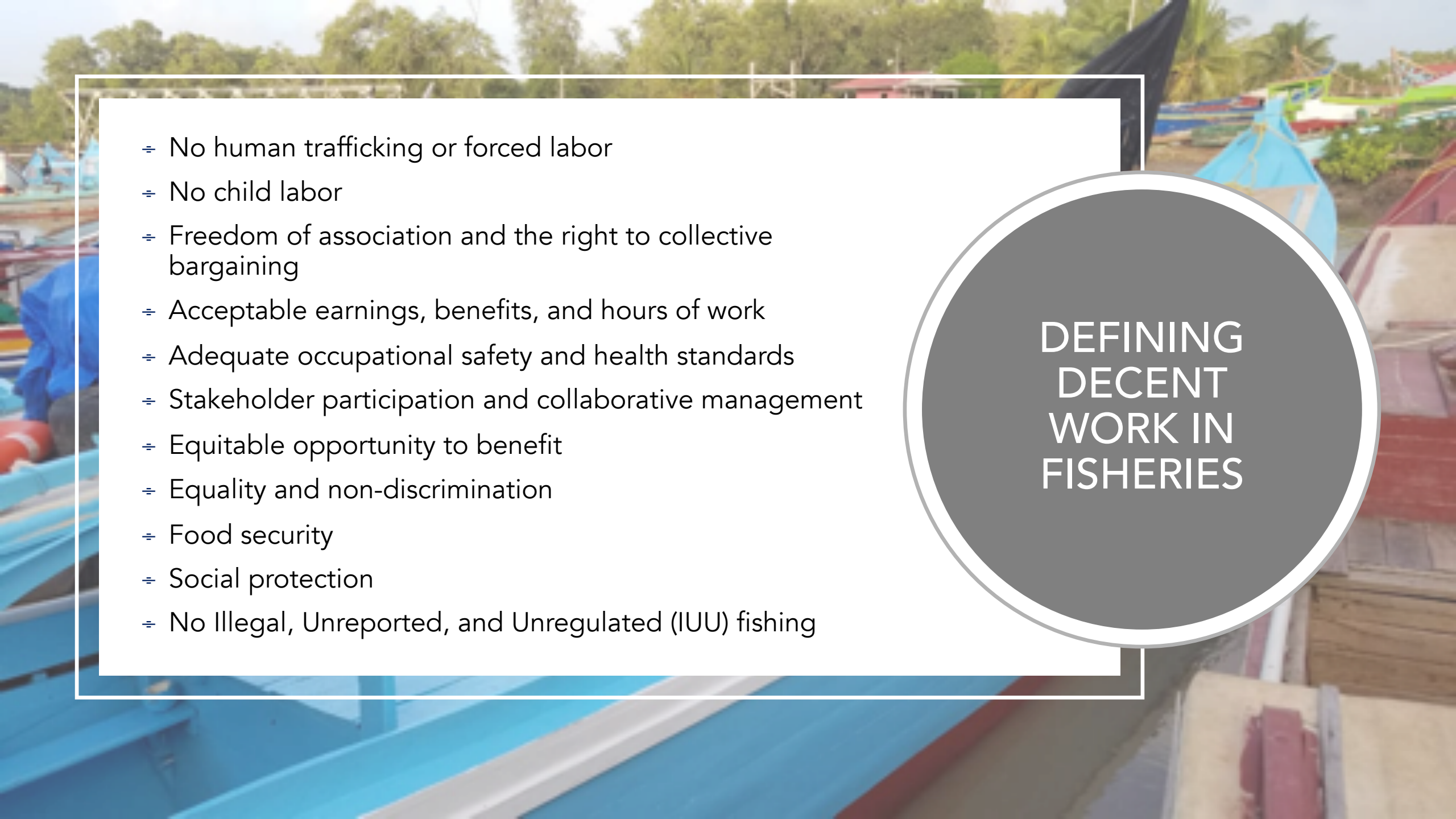
**PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS,
DIGNITY, AND
ACCESS TO RESOURCES**



**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

The background image shows a man in a dark shirt and pants standing in a fish market. He is looking down at something in his hands. Behind him is a wall with blue graffiti that includes the number "#6541303" and some letters. In the foreground, there are large fishing nets and a metal frame. The scene is outdoors with a corrugated metal roof visible at the top.

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.

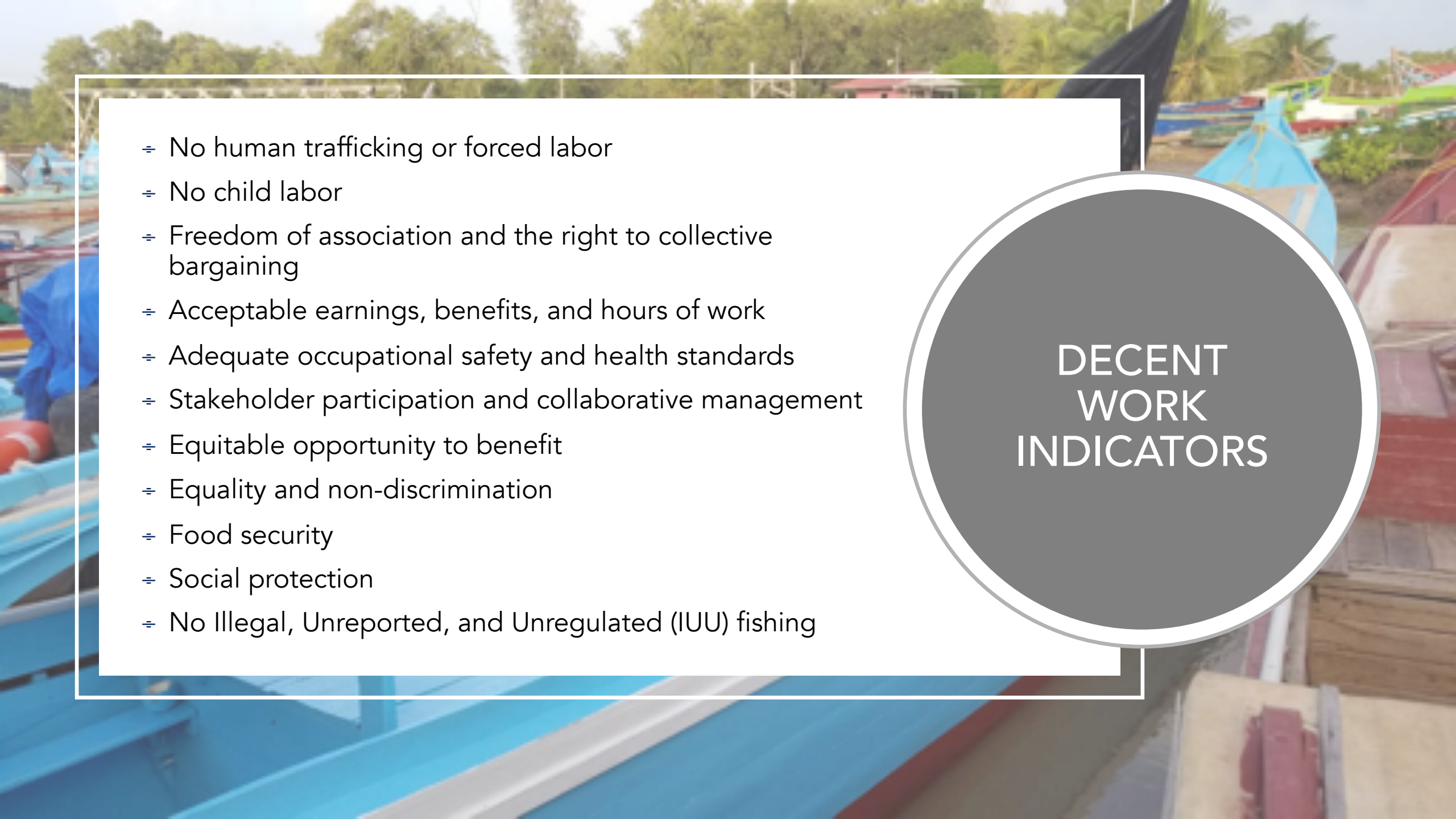


SUB-REGIONAL DECENT WORK ASSESSMENT

- ⇒ First comprehensive assessment of working conditions in the fisheries.
- ⇒ Highlights progress and areas of improvement.
- ⇒ Initiates a broader conversation around human and labor rights.

ASSESSMENT APPROACH

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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DECENT WORK INDICATORS

A photograph of a fish market scene. In the foreground, several large fish are laid out on a blue tray on the ground. To the right, a yellow plastic crate is filled with more fish. In the background, several people are standing around, some looking at the fish. A man in a red and white checkered shirt is leaning over a table, possibly weighing or inspecting a fish. A black vehicle with the text "HC 6882" is visible on the left side of the image. The scene is outdoors on a paved surface, and the lighting suggests it is daytime.

DESK-BASED FINDINGS

NOTABLE COMMITMENTS

Relevant conventions and agreements for workers in the fisheries sector	Ratifications		
	Guyana	Suriname	Trinidad and Tobago
Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188)			
Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)	✓	✓	✓
Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105)	✓	✓	✓
Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)	✓	✓	✓
Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)	✓	✓	✓
Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention, 1948 (No. 87)	✓	✓	✓
Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98)	✓	✓	✓
Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 (No. 154)		✓	
Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)	✓	✓	✓
Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)	✓	✓	✓

Table 1. Ratifications by country of relevant conventions and agreements to work in the fisheries sector.



WOMEN IN THE FISHERIES SECTOR

- ⇒ Women dominate post-harvest operations and are **essential for food security**.
- ⇒ Recent gender assessments provided important gender-disaggregated data.



MIGRANT LABOR

- ⇒ 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.



SURINAME

- ⇒ 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.

A photograph of a fish market scene. In the foreground, several large fish are laid out on a blue tray on the ground. To the right, a yellow plastic crate is filled with more fish. In the background, a man in a red and white patterned shirt is handling a fish. Other people are visible in the background, including a man in a red shirt and a woman in a white shirt. A black vehicle with the text "HC 6882" is partially visible on the left. The text "REGIONAL FINDINGS" is overlaid in a white box in the center of the image.

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 HEALTH STANDARDS

- ≡ Safety and standards vary.
- ≡ Limited monitoring and enforcement.
- ≡ *"The safety standards exist only on paper."*

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

"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...**



TRANSBOUNDARY, REGIONAL APPROACH

- ≡ 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.



Decent work in the shrimp and groundfish fisheries

PREPARED BY THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS (FAO) FOR THE FISHERIES OF GUYANA, SURINAME, AND TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

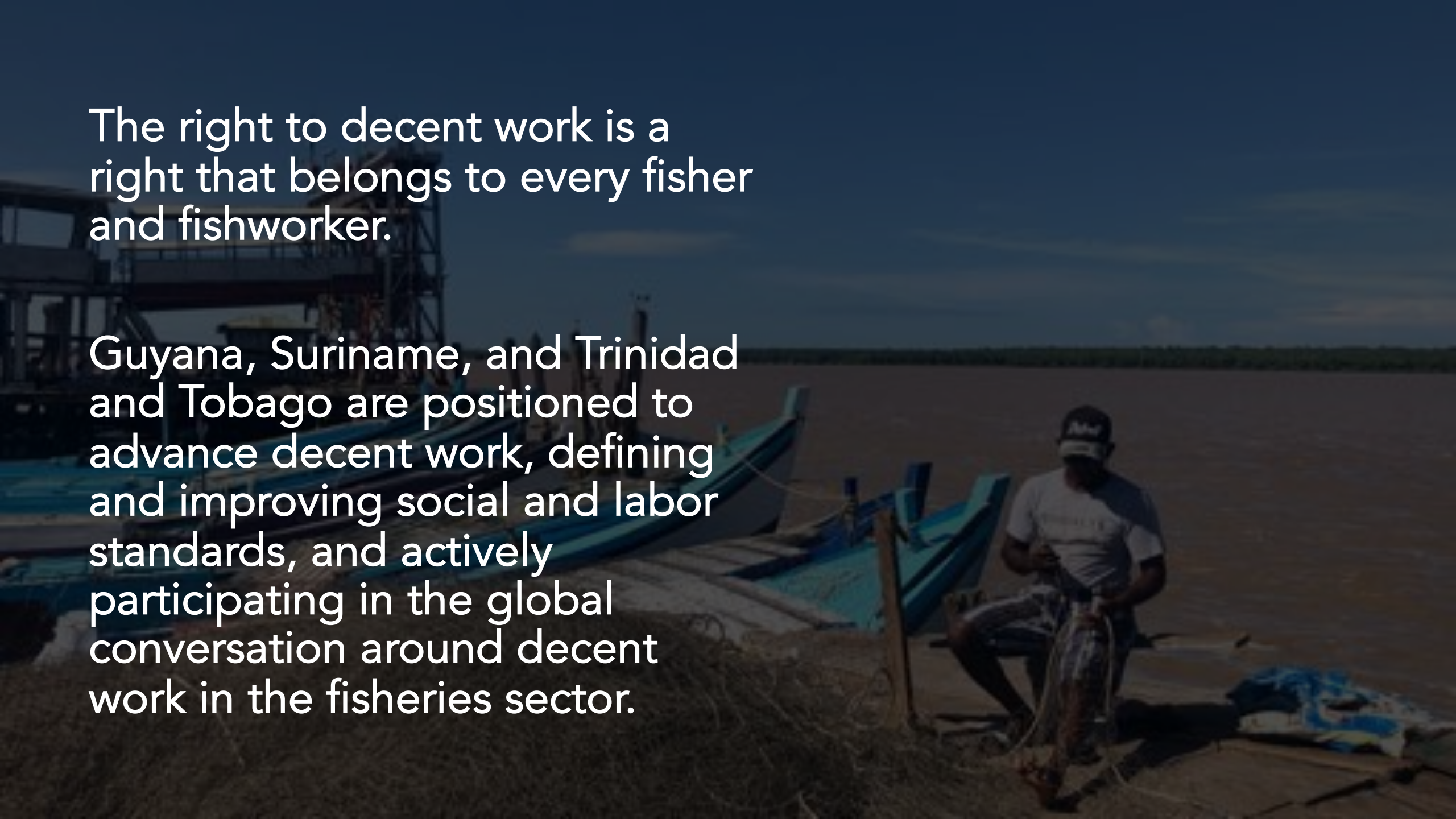
A guide for agencies, organizations, businesses, and employers.

ILO WORK IN FISHING CONVENTION (C188)

- ≡ 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.



A small, colorful boat with blue and yellow stripes is anchored in a calm body of water. The boat is reflected in the still water. The background shows a vast, flat horizon under a bright blue sky filled with soft, white clouds. The overall scene is peaceful and serene.

THANK YOU



Photos courtesy of Annalise Bayney and Gabrielle Lout
References upon request