



UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA
COMMISSION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
AND GOOD GOVERNANCE



REPORT

NATIONAL STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP

HUMAN RIGHTS AND SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES: ACCESS TO AND CO-MANAGEMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES

HELD ON 16-17 JULY, 2025 AT FOUR POINTS DAR ES SALAAM



1.0. Introduction

The Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance (CHRAGG), in collaboration with the Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR) and Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC), conducted a two-day workshop involving representatives from key actors in human rights, fisheries governance, marine conservation and Governance. The workshop aimed at disseminating and validating a background analysis report on Small-Scale Fishers and Fish Workers (SSF) and their access to and co-management of

marine resources, and served as a national forum, exploring potential legal and policy gaps in sustainable fisheries management and marine conservation efforts. Particularly, in blue economy developments and marine spatial planning (MSP).

This workshop was designed as part of the Cooperation Agreement between CHRAGG and the DIHR under the Sustainable Oceans Phase II programme in Tanzania. From this programme, CHARGG in collaboration with LHRC, conducted a background analysis on human rights, SSF, and their access to and co-management of marine resources in Mainland Tanzania.

1.2 Background

CHRAGG, in partnership with DIHR, is implementing the Sustainable Ocean Phase II project, an initiative grounded in the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) to strengthen the rights of Small-Scale Fishers (SSF) and promote inclusive marine resource governance. As part of this initiative, CHRAGG collaborated with the LHRC to conduct a comprehensive background analysis, identifying critical human rights concerns affecting SSF communities, particularly in equitable access to marine resources and meaningful participation in co-management frameworks.

The analysis underscores that Tanzania's fisheries laws and policies are well established and environmentally progressive, with explicit provisions to support SSF communities. However, limited coordination between human rights institutions and fisheries or conservation actors has resulted in fragmented implementation. This gap weakens the enforcement of rights to a healthy environment and fair access to aquatic resources. SSF communities face systemic barriers, including inadequate access to markets, credit, and infrastructure, while their traditional knowledge remains underutilized in formal governance processes.

Emerging dynamics within the blue economy, such as the expansion of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), industrial fisheries, aquaculture, mining, tourism, and energy production, present both opportunities and risks. While these sectors have the potential

to enhance SSF livelihoods and environmental stewardship, they also intensify competition for marine resources and increase the risk of conflict. SSF communities are particularly vulnerable to being marginalized or displaced by more dominant economic interests.

In response, the National Blue Economy Policy (2024) identifies the Fishery Master Spatial Plan (MSP) as a strategic instrument to balance conservation, economic development, and community well-being. The MSP Guidelines (2023), developed through a participatory process led by the Vice President's Office, emphasize inclusive planning and the active involvement of SSF stakeholders. Together, these instruments position MSP not merely as a technical tool, but as a rights-based mechanism to empower SSF communities and foster sustainable development.

Although a supportive legal and policy framework exists, persistent practical barriers continue to hinder meaningful participation especially for women and small-scale fisheries (SSF) representatives in national-level decision-making processes. While local and national initiatives aim to enhance gender representation, further investment is needed to achieve inclusive and equitable outcomes. In this context, national fisheries stakeholder workshops serve as critical platforms for convening actors, fostering collective action, and promoting integrated strategies that advance human rights for SSF communities.

1.3 Objectives

The workshop had two main objectives as follows:

- i. To bring together state and non-state human rights and SSF actors to foster shared understanding of how human rights relate to SSFs' access and co-management of marine resources and generate a common overview of relevant national fora, potential gaps in policy and legal frameworks, to identify good practices and solutions for SSF challenges.

- ii. To disseminate and validate findings of the background analysis on human rights, SSF, and their access to and co-management of marine resources in Mainland Tanzania.

1.4 Participants Profile

The workshop convened 45 participants including representatives from the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries (MLF), Marine Park Reserve Unit (MPRU), Tanzania Fisheries Institute (TAFIRI), Fishery Offices, CHRAG staff, Food Agricultural Food Organization (FAO), World Wide Fund (WWF), Vice President’s Office (Blue Economy and Biodiversity), Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), National Task Team of the Tanzanian National Plan of Action for SSF (NTT), International Conservation for Nature (ICN), youths from Human rights Clubs, Tanzania Women Fishers Association (TAWFA), Beach Management Units (BMUs), Representatives of Fisheries traders and Mwambao Coast Community Network.



Seated at the center is the Guest of Honor, Professor Mohamed Ali Sheikh, Director of Fisheries at the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries, accompanied by distinguished participants during the national workshop. The gathering underscored a shared commitment to advancing inclusive fisheries governance and stakeholder engagement. Source CHRAGG July, 2025.

1.5 Introductory Remarks

1.5.1 Remarks by Ms. Jovina Mchunguzi, Acting Director of Research and Documentation at CHRAGG

Ms. Mchunguzi extends a warm welcome to all participants and expresses appreciation for their time and commitment. She underscored the importance of the convening, noting that its primary objective was to validate the background analysis report and ensure that the findings are grounded in the lived experiences and insights of fisheries stakeholders. In her remarks, Ms. Mchunguzi emphasized that the workshop would serve as a strategic platform for dialogue, learning, and collaboration. She highlighted the opportunity for stakeholders to engage meaningfully with the report's findings, contributing to future joint advocacy and policy development efforts. To foster an inclusive and interactive environment, Ms. Mchunguzi invited participants to introduce themselves and share their expectations for the workshop. This gesture set a participatory tone for the two-day engagement, encouraging open knowledge-sharing and mutual learning among all attendees.



Ms. Jovina Mchunguzi, Assistant Director of the Department of Research, delivering opening remarks at the National Stakeholders Workshop held in Dar es Salaam. Source: CHRAGG, July 2025

1.5.2 Remarks by Ms. Sofie, An Advisor - Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR)

Ms. Sofie introduced DIHR as a globally recognized institution with technical expertise in advancing human rights across nearly 40 countries. She highlighted the launch of the Sustainable Ocean Project Phase II, which builds on successful initiatives in West African countries

such as Ghana and Senegal. Tanzania, she noted, is the first East African country to participate in the project. The initiative aims to promote a Human Rights-Based Approach to protecting the rights of small-scale



fishers and coastal communities, while strengthening co-management of marine resources in alignment with national development priorities and international human rights standards.

Ms. Sofie explained that due to time and resource constraints, Zanzibar was excluded from the project scope. She clarified that the initiative targets marine ecosystems and coastal resources, and does not cover inland fisheries. Acknowledging that fisheries governance is a non-union matter in Tanzania, she noted that Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar operate under separate legal and institutional frameworks. Accordingly, the background analysis report focuses on Mainland Tanzania, with occasional references to Zanzibar drawn from existing literature.

1.5.3 Remarks from Hon. Mohamed Hamad, Vice Chairperson of CHRAGG



Mohamed Hamad, Vice Chairperson of CHRAGG opened with gratitude for the opportunity to address the conference and warmly welcomed participants from across the country. He expressed appreciation to DIHR and LHRC for their vital collaboration in producing the

background analysis on the rights of small-scale fishers in Tanzania. This joint effort marks a milestone in promoting a human rights-based approach to marine resource governance.

He emphasized that small-scale fishers are central to food security and national income, yet face persistent challenges in accessing and managing marine resources equitably. The Vice Chairperson called for continued collaboration among stakeholders to ensure that the voices of SSF communities inform policy and legal frameworks. He reaffirmed CHRAGG's commitment to environmental justice, livelihood protection, and the dignity of coastal communities through evidence-based advocacy.

1.6 Opening Remarks

Professor Mohamed Ali Sheikh, speaking on behalf of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries, extended warm congratulations to CHRAGG for its steadfast commitment to cross sectoral collaboration. He emphasized that such partnerships spanning ministries, institutions, civil society, and development partners are not only commendable but legally and ethically essential under the CHRAGG Act, Chapter 391.

He called for deeper collaboration between the Commission and the Ministry, urging CHRAGG to actively engage in advancing shared goals within the fisheries sector. He highlighted research as a strategic tool for evidence-based policymaking, enabling the Ministry to promote



sustainable fishing and address sectoral challenges effectively. Citing FAO data, Professor Sheikh underscored the global and national significance of small-scale fisheries (SSF), noting their contribution to food security, employment, and poverty reduction. In Tanzania, SSF supports over 6 million livelihoods mostly women and contributes 1.8% to GDP, with over 522,000 metric tons of fish harvested annually.

He commended the background analysis report for guiding the workshop's design and stressed the need for inclusive dialogue to address legal and policy gaps affecting SSF communities. He conveyed the Minister's interest in a follow-up validation session to integrate Ministry recommendations and enhance the report's utility.

Professor Sheikh concluded by affirming the importance of human rights in fisheries governance and called for awareness campaigns to empower SSF communities in marine conservation. He then officially opened the workshop and wished participants a productive session.

2.0 THE STAKEHOLDERS WORKSHOP PRESENTATION, DISCUSSIONS AND DELIBERATIONS

2.1 Key Presentations

i. Placing human rights in sustainable small-scale fisheries:

- Introduction to human rights-based approach and how it can add value and guide laws and practices
- Introduction to the background analysis

ii. Human rights in governance of tenure in small-scale fisheries and resource management, and gender equality:

- Presentation of key findings and recommendations from the background analysis.
- Panel discussions with representatives of state actors, rights-holders and other non-state actors.

iii. Role of CHRAGG, and access to remedy:

- CHRAGG's mandate and presentation of key findings and recommendations from the background analysis
- Panel discussions with representatives of state actors, rights-holders and other non-state actors

iv. Blue Economy, MSP and biodiversity plans from a human rights and small-scale fisheries perspective

- Presentation of key findings and recommendations from the background analysis
- Panel discussions with representatives of state actors, rights-holders and other non-state actors

2.2 Key Issues Identified.

- i. Inadequate legal empowerment and limited awareness of rights among Small Scale Fisheries.
- ii. Weak enforcement of existing co- management regulations.
- iii. Power imbalance between community members and commercial investors.
- iv. Gender inequality in decision making within marine resource governance in BMUs.
- v. Gaps in coordination between national and local authorities in marine policy implementation.
- vi. Gender violence to Women (Fish for sex).

2.3 Discussion and Key Take Away

2.3.1 Inadequate legal empowerment and limited awareness of rights among Small Scale Fisheries

Small-Scale Fisheries (SSF) communities face systemic legal empowerment challenges, including limited access to legal representation and low awareness of their rights. In conflict scenarios such as disputes between fishers and seaweed growers many resorts to non-judicial mechanisms due to financial constraints, leaving rights infringed and unaddressed. National laws often override customary fishing rights, enabling investors to occupy prime fishing grounds and exacerbating poverty. Fishers remain largely unaware of their rights to food, work, land, and governance participation, while inadequate outreach and education hinder their ability to engage in policy processes. Additionally, exploitative labor practices such as license with holding by boat owners further marginalize SSF workers.

Recommendations

- **Inclusive Governance:** establish participatory platforms to involve SSF communities in marine resource decision-making across coastal districts.
- **Recognition of Customary Rights:** integrate customary fishing rights into co-management frameworks and legal instruments to safeguard SSF access and tenure.
- **Human Rights Awareness:** roll out targeted outreach and training programs to educate SSF stakeholders on



rights to food, work, and governance.

- **Collaborative Capacity Building:** facilitate joint initiatives between CHRAGG and partner organizations to deliver sustained legal empowerment in vulnerable coastal regions.

2.3.2 Power imbalance between community members and Marine Management Authorities.

- Limits representation in legal and policy reforms.
- SSF representatives lack a unified voice and face challenges in formal decision-making platforms.
- Negative attitudes toward public meetings hinder effective consultation and co-management of marine resources.
- Gender Inequity in Decision-Making: Women are underrepresented in leadership and decision-making processes due to a combination of fear, entrenched cultural norms, and social barriers that restrict their active participation.

Recommendations

- Establish Species-Based Subcommittees within BMUs: Enhances targeted decision-making and policy responsiveness.
- Foster Strategic Partnerships” Collaborate with government agencies, BMUs, fisheries officers, marine authorities, and NGOs to support reform and sustainability.
- Empower SSF Communities on Participation: Raise awareness about the value of local engagement to improve inclusivity and representation in resource governance.



2.3.3 Gaps in coordination between national and local authorities

Limited coordination between national and local authorities undermines effective co-management of marine resources, leading to exclusion of SSF communities and increased conflict over coastal development. Conflicts within SSF communities are prevalent, primarily driven by competition over marine resources and coastal space. Disputes often arise between artisanal fishers and seaweed farmers, small-scale and industrial trawlers, and even across national borders such as tensions between Tanzania and Kenya near Pangani. These conflicts intensify when SSF communities



face access restrictions imposed by marine conservation authorities or when industrial trawlers encroach on nearshore zones traditionally used by artisanal fishers. Additionally, competition between seaweed growers and fishers frequently results in gear damage and strained community relations.

Recommendations

Inclusive and participatory approaches.

- Facilitate coordinated action between BMUs and Locally Managed Marine Areas to ensure active community participation in resource governance and decision-making, targeting measurable engagement benchmarks.
- Advance Legal Reforms for Tenure Security: Support the establishment of Inshore Exclusion Zones (IEZs) and implement participatory MSPs in priority coastal regions to clarify tenure rights, reduce spatial overlap, and minimize resource use conflicts.
- Institutionalize Human Rights-Based Approaches: Advocate for the integration of secure tenure, gender equity, and recognition of customary practices into national marine governance frameworks, with targeted capacity-building for stakeholders including strengthening **BMU Capacity and Transparency**.

- Scale CHRAGG and Marine Parks Outreach Initiatives: Strengthen inter-agency collaboration to deliver targeted education campaigns, create youth programs, and partner with CHRAGG and NGOs to promote sustainable practices and rights awareness.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Establish inclusive mediation councils, clearly separate fishing and farming zones, and promote cross-border cooperation to prevent disputes.
- **National Organization and Advocacy:** Form specific fisher subcommittees, support savings groups with micro-loans, and build alliances for policy reform and investment.
- Demarcate fishing zones, and implement climate resilience programs in SSF hotspots, aiming to reduce sectoral conflicts.

2.3.4 Gender violence to Women (Fish for sex).

Key Issues:

- “Fish-for-sex” is a widespread form of gender-based violence in coastal SSF communities, driven by women’s lack of access to fishing rights and resources.
- Economic hardship, declining fish stocks, and social pressures especially in matrilineal societies force women into exploitative relationships.



- Women traders, often single or widowed, face heightened vulnerability and health risks, including HIV/AIDS.
- There is limited institutional protection, prompting calls for urgent government intervention.

Recommendations:

- Empower women economically and raise awareness of their rights.

- Reform fisheries governance to ensure equitable access and eliminate exploitative practices.
- Promote community led, gender-sensitive accountability mechanisms.

3.0 Way Forward

- i. CHRAGG to organize a validation session with the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries (MLF) to incorporate their inputs into the Final Background Report.
- ii. In collaboration with the Legal and Human Rights Center (LHRC), CHRAGG to develop an outreach program targeting fisheries communities.
- iii. CHRAGG to conduct a specific study on gender dimensions in fish landing sites
- iv. CHRAGG to draft and publish a policy brief on small-scale fishers' (SSF) rights along Tanzania's coastline, while exploring opportunities to expand the focus to inland SSF areas, including the Great Lakes—Nyasa, Rukwa, Tanganyika, and Victoria.

4.0 Conclusion

In his closing remarks, Commissioner Nyanda Shuli of CHRAGG emphasized the significance of the workshop, expressing deep appreciation to all participants, facilitators, and stakeholders for their valuable contributions. He highlighted the workshop's role in reaffirming the importance of small-scale fisheries to Tanzania's food security, economic resilience, and community well-being. The validation process not only enhanced the credibility of the report but also laid a foundation for inclusive, rights based reforms. Commissioner Shuli concluded by urging continued collaboration beyond the workshop, calling for sustained commitment to transparency, innovation, and policy action that uplifts small-scale fisheries across both coastal and inland waters.

Picture of the activity

