



CASE STUDY PART 2: //KARAS REGION

IMPLEMENTING THE SSF GUIDELINES IN SMALL-SCALE FISHING COMMUNITIES IN THREE REGIONS OF NAMIBIA

(Oshana, Zambezi and //Karas Regions)

BACKGROUND

The year 2023 marks ten years since the Technical Consultations to draft the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines), were held in the FAO Headquarters in Rome. Today, Namibia has become one of the pioneering countries that are driving the implementation of the SSF Guidelines. By implication, the country is promoting a sustainable development agenda for small-scale fisheries and recognizes the important role that the sector plays in improving socio-economic livelihoods, food, nutrition security and economic resilience for small-scale fisheries actors.

CONTEXT

This publication presents three (3) case studies that explore the socio-economic conditions of small-scale fishers and share the experiences of three fishing communities during the implementation of the SSF Guidelines. The fishing communities are situated in three regions of Namibia - the Oshana, Zambezi and //Karas – and therefore represent variable landscapes, diverse socio-economic conditions, and biodiversity contexts. The case studies present and summarize the results, findings and lessons learnt during the implementation of the SSF guidelines and present the results that emanated from implementing the SSF Guidelines and information collected during informed the development of Namibia's National Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries (NPOA-SSF).

Launched in June 2022 by Namibia's Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources, the NPOA-SSF is an action plan aimed at leveraging support to drive tangible socio-economic benefits for small-scale fishers nationally. The Action Plan is positioned to uplift the livelihoods of over 280,000 Namibians who depend directly or indirectly on the small-scale fisheries sector countrywide. The Action Plan suggests key strategies that will empower small-scale fishers; provide employment opportunities; and promote the development of the small-scale fisheries value chain to upscale national and regional fish trade, and to secure food fish households. The NPOA-SSF is underpinned by the principles of the SSF Guidelines, and like the SSF Guidelines, the NPOA-SSF is Namibia's first National instrument aimed at promoting and securing sustainable small-scale fisheries in the context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication in the country.

The Snyfontein small-scale fishing community can secure livelihoods through the Neckartal Dam, //Karas Region, Namibia

CONTEXT

This case study is the second in a series of three (3) case studies that present the results, findings and lessons learnt during the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) in Namibia. This second case study explores development potential of small-scale fisheries for the Snyfontein small-scale fishing community located in //Karas Region. The case study presents the findings that emanated during the community sensitization process on the SSF Guidelines, a process which supported the development of Namibia's National Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries (NPOA-SSF).

THE SNYFONTEIN SMALL-SCALE FISHING COMMUNITY

Not much was known about the Snyfontein small-scale fishing community prior to the implementation of the SSF Guidelines. The Snyfontein small-scale fishing community (fishing community) is located approximately 5km from the upstream catchment areas of the Neckartal Dam in the //Karas Region. The small-scale fishing community resides in the Snyfontein settlement in the Berseba Constituency, approximately 35 kilometres from Keetmanshoop in the //Karas Region.

The Snyfontein area remote and consists of approximately 22 villages with over 200 households (comprising women, men, youth, and children) who depend on small-scale pastoral agricultural activities. The settlement holds a deep-rooted fishing heritage that traces back to the 1900s. In earlier years, the community used traditional fishing gear to catch fish in small pools and dams following the rainy season. A fishing trap was demonstrated during the community engagement sessions (Fig.1).

The construction of the Neckartal Dam can be viewed as a positive development aimed at accelerating



Figure 1. Hulda Swartbooij, a small-scale fisherwoman from the Snyfontein fishing community validated and attended the launch of the NPOA-SSF together with over 60 small-scale fisherwomen and men, fish workers, fish traders and fish processors from Namibia, Angola, and South Africa.

agricultural development in the //Karas Region. The dam's construction has however altered the Snyfontein fishing community's access to the historic fishing grounds because it has resulted in flooding of the upstream dam area, which is where the communities used to practice fishing. As a result, the fishing community is no longer able to catch fish using traditional fishing gear since the water body has increased to a point where they cannot access and utilise the water resource safely for fishing.

Sensitizing the Snyfontein small-scale fishing community

Two sensitization workshops were held with the Snyfontein small-scale fishing community. The objectives of the workshops were to collect baseline data on the community structure, to understand their socio-economic conditions and to assess the development potential of the Neckartal Dam in

supporting livelihoods through small-scale fisheries. The workshops were held in Keetmanshoop, a town located approximately 50km from the upstream Snyfontein fishing grounds. The selection of small-scale fishers was undertaken through a multi-stakeholder partnership and consultation process. Support in the form of mobility costs, lodging and meals was provided to enable the identified small-scale fishers to attend the workshop.

LOCALIZING THE SSF GUIDELINES (AFRIKAANS)

Implementing the SSF Guidelines required localization strategies. The workshops were conducted in the local language through live interpretation services. Visuals in the form of videos were used to deliver clear messages. This encouraged open discussion among the fishing community members.

For the Snyfontein small-scale fishers, Afrikaans is the most widely spoken language in the southern parts of Namibia, in addition to the local *Khowkhoegowab* language. The Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication were translated directly in Afrikaans as “*Vrywillige riglyne vir kleinskaalse visserye in die konteks van voedselsekerheid en uitwissing van armoede.*” The National Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries was directly translated as “*Nasionale Plan van Aksie vir Klein-Skaal Visserye.*”

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS STRENGTHEN SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES ENGAGEMENT

The engagement process with the Snyfontein small-scale fishing community received strong Government support through the lead Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources in partnership with the Snyfontein Village Council leadership, Snyfontein Traditional Authority, //Karas Regional Council, the University of Namibia, the Environmental Investment Fund, the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism, Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Land Reform, NamWater the Benguela Current Commission, and the media through the Namibia Broadcasting Corporation. This multi-stakeholder partnership approach was critical in bringing together key stakeholders and partners to share information and knowledge and to contextualize how best to support the SSF Guidelines implementation process. Partner representatives provided subject matter expertise in fisheries; environment, funding support and water related issues among others.

Development potential of small-scale fisheries at the Neckartal Dam

The Neckartal Dam was constructed to drive agricultural production (including small-scale fisheries and aquaculture). Findings from a feasibility study aimed at assessing the development potential of small-scale fisheries on the Neckartal Dam



Figure 2. Deputy Captain Stefanus Goliath (left) and Snyfontein Councillor Cedric Thomas (right) demonstrate the traditional fish trap used by the Snyfontein community before the construction of the Neckartal Dam. Source FAO 2022.



Figure 3. Multi-stakeholder partnerships including Government, Local Authorities, Academia, State-Owned Enterprises, and the media supported the case study to inform new knowledge creation.

established the Neckartal Dam holds potential to support small-scale capture fisheries. A total of 11 fish species were identified in the dam. All 11 species are considered as food fish and thus have potential to support the socio-economic livelihoods, food, and nutrition security needs of the small-scale fishing community. The Snyfontein small-scale fishing community happens to be the primary community that resides closest to the dam, and therefore stand to directly benefit from the dam's fish resources. There are however establishment challenges for small-scale fisheries on the Neckartal Dam.

Challenges in accessing and utilizing the fisheries resource

Despite the potential of the Neckartal Dam to support small-scale fisheries, the Snyfontein Fishing community is currently not able to reap the full benefits due to the following reasons: -

- **Safe access to the resource:** Construction of the Neckartal Dam has resulted in upstream flooding. The community is no longer able to utilize their traditional fishing gear due to the high water which presents safety challenges since the fishing community has not benefited from safety or swimming training.
- **Alternative fishing gear:** Due to the high water, the fishing community can no longer use traditional fishing traps to catch fish. In addition to safety equipment, safety and

swimming training, the community would need to be sensitized on the use of alternative fishing gear (e.g., nets of the correct mesh sizes) to enable them to catch fish for their livelihoods.

- **Alternative access methods:** One of the methods available for accessing the Neckartal Dam is using a boat, however, there is no landing site, and the community does not have access to resources nor knowledge on safe navigation techniques or fishing with nets in deep water.
- **Access to finance:** Undertaking swimming courses; training in safe navigation techniques and procuring alternative fishing gear requires access to finance which falls outside the reach of the Snyfontein small-scale fishing community.

SNYFONTEIN SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES ORGANIZATION ESTABLISHED

Armed with new knowledge gained during the sensitization process on the SSF Guidelines, the Snyfontein small-scale fishing community decided to organize themselves into a Small-Scale Fisheries Organization (Snyfontein SSFO) and to lobby for solutions. The Snyfontein SSFO consists of women,



Figure 4. Common carp and tilapia caught in the Neckartal Dam make up 2 of the 11 fish species found in the dam.

youth, and men from the Snyfontein village. The committee draws its strength and support from the Village Council and Traditional Authority who participated during the SSF Guidelines sensitization process. Three (3) members of the fishing community participated in the launch of the NPOA-SSF where they had an opportunity to meet and engage with small-scale fishers from across the country. Today, the Snyfontein SSFO consists of approximately 30 members whose awareness has been raised and who are engaging and working together to find ways to support their livelihoods through the fisheries of the Neckartal Dam.

POTENTIAL FOR A SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES VALUE CHAIN

There is potential to establish a small-scale fisheries value chain across the 11 fish species available in the dam. This can enhance sustainability and competitiveness for the Snyfontein fishing community since it can lead to sustainable incomes. Achieving the value chain potential will require support across the different value chain functions from production (or fishing) to collection, transport, and storage (cooling facilities); processing and marketing.

The Snyfontein small-scale fishing community is a vulnerable community that is remotely located. The community can benefit from the climate finance and access to sustainable and affordable clean energy solutions to drive small-scale fishing enterprise development (e.g., renewable energy cooling and ice making infrastructure)

Productive resources are required to establish the Snyfontein small-scale fisheries value chain. These include land, labour, capital, and entrepreneurship. An assessment was undertaken to determine which factors of production are available and which are required to support the establishment of a small-scale fisheries value chain for the Snyfontein SSFO. If support becomes available, it is anticipated that the fishing community will be able to secure their livelihoods through Neckartal Dam’s fisheries resource.

It is anticipated that supporting the small-scale fisheries value chain establishment will lead to SME pathways as fisherwomen and men identify areas of intervention which can be addressed through Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

<i>Land and Resources</i>	<i>Labour</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Land is available ✓ Fisheries resource are available X No electricity for processing and cooling facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Labour is available within the Snyfontein fishing community X Community has not been trained in best fishing practices
<i>Capital</i>	<i>Entrepreneurship</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> X No fishing boat, nets, rods X No processing facilities (to support fresh fish processing) X No cooling facilities (so support fresh fish processing) X No drying facilities (dried fish processing) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Snyfontein SSFO eager to commence business X Lack of enterprise development awareness X Lack of micro finance for start up

KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

This case study demonstrates how the emergence of a new natural resource (the Neckartal Dam) presents both opportunities and challenges for the Snyfontein small-scale fishing community and makes recommendations to enhance the opportunities through addressing the key challenges that the fishing community faces. Given the safety concerns raised for the small-scale fishing community, a holistic approach to development is required to enable them to flourish:

- **The sensitization process on the SSF Guidelines** raised the awareness of the Snyfontein fishing community's rights and responsibilities as they seek ways to secure their livelihoods through fishing on the Neckartal Dam. The process provided establishment support for the SSFO and empowered their members;
- **The assessment of the development potential of small-scale fisheries at the Neckartal Dam** established that the dam presents

both opportunities (rich source of fish) and challenges (safe access) for the Snyfontein fishing community. These require addressing in order to unlock the dam's potential for small-scale fishers;

- **Productive resources** of the Neckartal Dam include fish as a natural resource which presents an opportunity to secure the livelihoods of the fishing community as a source of food fish and to uplift the livelihoods through enterprise formation. In addition to natural resources other productive resources such as capital (e.g., small infrastructure, equipment, and buildings) and entrepreneurship (including business development skills, training, and capacity development) are critical empowerment tools for small-scale fisheries development;
- **Multi-stakeholder partnerships** play a critical role in harnessing information from Subject Matter Expertise, generating and sharing knowledge and providing visibility for supporting small-scale fisheries development at Snyfontein;



Figure 5. The upstream area of Neckartal Dam has been identified as a potential fish sanctuary and is ripe for eco-tourism activities such as sport fishing, research and bird watching.

- **Private and development sector** are important partners that can support access to funding, support training and infrastructure development to assist the Snyfontein SSFO members to safely access and utilize the fisheries resources and provide Business Development Training and finance enterprise development needs;
- **Training interventions** such as safety and first aid training, as well as small infrastructure and equipment needs (e.g., landing site life vests, fishing gear and boats) can be beneficial for the Snyfontein fishing community;
- **Diversification options:** In addition to small-scale fisheries development, the upstream Neckartal dam area is pristine and a potential sanctuary for fish, birds, and wildlife. This presents diversification options for the establishment of Nature Based Enterprises such as eco-tourism; developing eco-tourism activities such as camping; sport fishing, serving as a freshwater fisheries research area and satisfying bird watching experiences among others.
- **Enterprise and business development support** for the small-scale fishing community can be established in collaboration with enterprises such as the Namibia Fish Consumption Promotion Trust, to secure and promote locally procured freshwater fish. In addition, renewable energy infrastructure (e.g., cooling infrastructure and ice making machines) are an important consideration due to the remoteness of the area.

A holistic development approach coupled with multi-stakeholder partnerships is required to enable small-scale fishers to benefit from the Neckartal Dam's fisheries resources. , promoting community participation and empowerment as well as sustainable resource management is important for fair socio-economic development and resilience for Snyfontein's small scale fishers.

KEY RESOURCES

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