



Minutes

11th FIP + FDM Steering Committee Meeting Friday, 22nd October 2021

Members present were:

Robert Usher-Northern Fishermen Cooperative Society Ltd.
Hugo Miranda- Belize Department of Cooperatives
Arlenie Rogers, University of Belize Environmental Research Institute (UB-ERI)
Nicole Auil Gomez-Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)
Marah Hardt-Future of Fish (FoF)
James Foley-The Nature Conservancy (TNC)

Members absent were:

Elmer Rodriguez (Chair)-National Fishermen Producers Cooperative Ltd.
Eugenio Santos- National Fishermen Producers Cooperative Society Ltd.
Jason Arnold-National Fishermen Producers Cooperative Society Ltd.
Mauro Gongora- Belize Fisheries Department (BFD)
Kenneth Esquivel- Belize Fisheries Department (BFD)
Issac Lamby- Northern Fishermen Cooperative Society Ltd.
Gregory Lambey- Northern Fishermen Cooperative Society Ltd.
Roberto Bautista –Northern Fishermen Cooperative Society Ltd.
Estevan Solis- Northern Fishermen Cooperative Society Ltd.
Jaime Velazquez- Northern Fishermen Cooperative Society Ltd.
Sydney Fuller -Belize Fishermen Cooperatives Association

Observers:

Wendy Casasola- The Nature Conservancy, Recording Secretary
Paulina Diaz- The Nature Conservancy

In the absence of Mr. Rodriguez, Northern Fishermen Cooperative Society Ltd. as the Alternate Lead should chair the meeting. However, Mr. Usher handed the role of the chair to Mr. Foley. No member objected. Mr. Foley called the meeting to order at 10:15 a.m.

Confirmation of the Tenth General Meeting Minutes of Steering Committee

1. Mrs. Gomez suggested replacing language in page four with the following “as well as the Vessel Monitoring System Pilot project by WCS and the Lobster trap and shade inventory project by TASA”. There being no other comments or



suggested changes from members, **a motion was moved by Mr. Foley to accept the Minutes and this was seconded by Ms. Hardt and passed without dissent.**

Fishery Progress social requirements presentation

1. Ms. Hardt delivered a presentation focusing on the FisheryProgress Social Responsibility component. She highlighted that FisheryProgress.org is the website where reports are submitted every six months and the platform used by companies, NGOs and Government to seek information on the progress of FIPs around the world and their ratings.
2. As of May 2021, FisheryProgress has implemented new Social Responsibility Requirements, which all FIPs must uphold in order to maintain their rating. She added that there is a Social Responsibility Assessment (SRA), which will also form part of the reporting package to FisheryProgress. This SRA is composed of three components: (1) Requirements for all FIPs, (2) Additional requirements for at-risk FIPs and (3) Voluntary reporting for FIPs wishing to exceed minimum requirements. Ms. Hardt shared that we are a triple impact FIP and that we already include some of these social components but we need to align it with the framework that FisheryProgress requires which are based on international laws for Human and Labor Rights Policy.
3. She shared the Human Rights Code of Conduct document and highlighted that by signing, participant organizations to FIPs agree that they will do their utmost best to uphold the values and principles included in the Human Rights Code of Conduct. Only FIP leading organizations are required to sign it, however she indicated that having all members uphold to the commitments would be better. The deadline to submit signed document is end of November. You can read more about the Human code of conduct [here](#).
 - 3.1 Mrs. Gomez agreed that the Human Rights Code of Conduct should be signed by all members and not only the FIP leads. She suggested that the Belize Fisheries Department and the Belize Department of Cooperatives should also sign it.
 - 3.2 Dr. Roger highlighted that the code of conduct speaks to working hours and that many fishers in Belize make the personal choice of working additional hours. Therefore, she seeks clarification on how this will apply to those fishers that make the choice to work long hours.
 - 3.3 Ms. Hardt responded that this would apply and protect those workers that do not have a choice. If fishers in Belize decide to work long days



and hours and as long as it is not violating any laws in Belize, it should be fine. He also indicated that she would seek further clarification from FisheryProgress on this matter.

4. Ms. Hardt continued her presentation highlighting the second required action, which is to complete a self-evaluation against the FisheryProgress criteria for increased risk of forced labor and human trafficking. The self-evaluation was completed during the call. The answers to all the questions were “No” hence the Steering Committee confirmed that our FIP is not at risk. Mr. Foley signed on behalf of all members and submitted the online form.
5. The third required action was to undertake the best efforts to make fishers aware of their rights. This is to ensure that fishers know of the FIP’s commitment to Human Rights Code of Conduct and the availability of grievance mechanisms and how to use them. She added that we would need to demonstrate compliance with this requirement by providing a description and evidence of the efforts to make fishers aware of their rights.
 - 5.1 She added that FoF created a condensed version of the Human Rights Code of Conduct and suggested taking the following actions: 1. Use the Communications Task Force to create Facebook posts sharing information on the policy and create Facebook messenger groups to share information as well. 2. Coops could support by using existing notice boards near landing sites and include this as agenda items in the AGMs. 3. FIP Communication and Community Engagement Officer could support by creating WhatsApp groups and putting info on notice boards in communities.
 - 5.2 Mr. Miranda added that they have officers in each district that visit communities where they can distribute code of conduct information. He added that a new mechanism needs to be created such as a 3 minutes video to share via WhatsApp, which would be more effective since some fishers do not like to read.
 - 5.3 Mrs. Gomez suggested that the Communications Task Force could also think about other communication materials that can be created apart from the ones mentioned. She added that it could be tied to big events such as Reef Week and Fisherfolk month.
 - 5.4 Ms. Diaz added that pictures or icons that are easier to understand should also be added, targeting the audience that is unable to read.
6. Ms. Hardt proceeded with the presentation by saying that FisheryProgress is also requesting that FIPs provide information about the vessels or fishers involved in



the FIP. She added that there are two options and that the Steering Committee should decide on one option today. Option 1: a list of all the vessels in the FIP that includes, vessel name, gear type, name of owners names of operators (if applicable), flag, national registration number, landing site, or option 2: A description of the fleet that includes the number of vessels, landing sites for the catch, home communities of the fishers, and gear type.

6.1 Mr. Foley suggested that option one would be the better option using the data from Tally system but would require an agreement from Coops to create a database. However, he indicated that the only gap he sees with this option is if there are registered Coop members that do not land their products at the coops landing sites.

6.2 Mr. Usher suggested that both options could work; however, suggested to go with option one because all that information is available now that Tally is in effect.

6.3 Ms. Hardt also suggested going for option one since Belize Fisheries Department and the Coops already have this information.

6.4 Mrs. Gomez indicated that the Fisheries Department Fisherfolk Licensing Database would have the information needed.

6.5 No member objected to option one.

7. Ms. Hardt added that there is the need to demonstrate that there is a grievance mechanism available to all fishers in the FIP. She stated that if there is not a grievance mechanism we will need to create one because we need to provide evidence of at least one grievance mechanism available to all fishers in the FIP to report human abuses. She added that if there are mechanisms already in existence, we could build on it.

7.1 Mr. Foley with permission from Mr. Rodriguez shared the grievance for National Coop. He added that this is a product from the CADS consultancy.

7.2 Mr. Foley asked Mr. Usher if Norther has a grievance mechanism and if they would be willing to adapt the one created for national.

7.3 Mr. Usher responded that they do not have a grievance mechanism but grievance forms part of the by-laws so if there is any grievance from members, they have a right to direct it to the committee of management. However, Mr. Usher expressed interest in reviewing the document and producing a grievance mechanism for Northern Coop.

Update on FIP Communication & Community Engagement Officer role



8. Mr. Foley reported that Blue Ventures agreed to the ToR and we will proceed with contracting them for the next 6 months. He added that they will play a key implementation role in the FIP+FDM Communication Task Force and develop/establish a communication/engagement strategy between the co-ops and their members. Click [here](#) to review the ToR in more detail.
 - a. Mrs. Gomez asked if Blue Ventures is expected to chair the Communications Task Force and expressed her concern of having a short-term consultant chair the Task Force.
 - b. Mr. Foley responded that Blue Ventures will not chair the Communications Task Force; instead will be filling an advisory role by supporting the Task Force to develop and strengthen its communications strategy.

Update on FIP Stakeholder Coordination role

9. Mr. Foley informed that it was not possible to contract Cecilia due to not having enough funds after recognizing that the role needed to be split. He added that TNC will assume the role of FIP Coordinator for at least 6 months, Ms. Wendy Casasola to lead the process with support from Mr. Foley.

Steering Committee membership and FIP participant protocols

10. Mr. Foley informed that we have received interest from new entities that want to join the FIP but it has been brought to the attention that there is a lack of formal procedure for the following: new FIP participants, inactive Steering Committee members, new membership to committee and industry membership as FIP participants. He added that although these protocols should be developed; there needs to be balanced representation especially if membership is extended to international buyers.
 - 10.1 Mr. Miranda commented that the coop has a system whereby if a member is absent for three consecutive meetings without any justification, they are removed and replaced by another member.
 - 10.2 Mr. Foley asked members if they agree to have a three-strike rule.
 - 10.3 Dr. Roger commended that this should apply to some members but not to those members that are crucial for the FIP. She recommended writing a letter to the specific organizations so that another member of that organization is nominated to attend the meetings or develop strategies to get them involved.



10.4 Mrs. Gomez agreed that there is not a replacement for some of the organizations that form the FIP. She suggested that the chairperson should either have a conversation or send a letter to the organizations not attending the meetings. She added that the conservation on absentees is brought-up in each meeting therefore, suggested to pass a resolution for the chairperson to communicate with the Belize Fisheries Department and other organizations to address the lack of representation in meetings.

10.5 Mr. Miranda agreed that Fisheries Department plays a critical role in the FIP and their representation is important, therefore supported the resolution for the chairperson to reach out to these organizations. Mr. Miranda had at that time texted the Acting Fisheries Administrator and alerted him of the situation, of which the FA responded to check on the matter.

10.6 Mr. Gomez also commented that it is important to institutionalize the task forces to ensure participation. She and Dr. Rogers agreed to take the lead in establishing the Research and Monitoring Task Force.

Next steps for the FIP

11. Mr. Foley shared that the FIP focus will be on addressing the gaps identified in Fishery Progress FIP progress update feedback, which includes FIP communications and market development gaps. He added that the gap of communication will be addressed through Blue Ventures by developing a comprehensive communications strategy. He continued by saying that TNC and FoF will be working on niche market development through Compete Caribbean proposal.

Update on Compete Caribbean proposal

12. Mr. Foley reported that the second draft of the proposal was submitted on September 3rd and feedback was expected on September 22nd but not yet received. However, it is expected that the final submission will be done in 1-2 weeks from now.

Action items

13. The Human Rights Code of Conduct to be shared with all members to read. A document requesting members' signatures as an indication that they will uphold to the principles and values of the Code of Conduct also be shared.
14. Mrs. Hardt to seek clarification from Fishery Progress about how the Human Rights Code of Conduct will apply to those fishers that decide on their own to work long days and hours.



15. Coop Department to take the lead in developing audio/video to share via WhatsApp and which can also be posted on the Facebook.
16. Mr. Foley will share the grievance mechanism document produced by CADS to Northern to review and return with changes and feedback, indicating of they would like to adopt.
17. Mr. Elmer to communication or send a letter to those organization not attending meetings – namely the Belize Fisheries Department and Belize Fishermen Cooperative Association
18. Mrs. Gomez and Dr. Rogers to take the lead to establish the Research and Monitoring Task Force.
19. Mr. Usher and Mr. Rodriguez to provide a list of all the vessels in the FIP that includes, vessel name, gear type, name of owners names of operators (if applicable), flag, national registration number, landing site (in reference to section 6).

Adjournment

20. Next Steering Committee meeting is scheduled for December 02nd, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon.
21. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned by Mr. Foley at 12:26 p.m. and seconded by Mrs. Gomez.