Development Trust

Small-scale fishers across the country are gearing up for the implementation of the Small-Scale Fisheries (SSF) policy.

Though a number of details have to be clarified, and some stakeholders are adopting a wait and see attitude, government has approved an implementation plan and has stated it wants to move swiftly.

Some have warned that this final stage of the policy process – its implementation – may prove to be the most difficult.

It is expected that President Jacob Zuma will sign off on the amendments to the Marine Living Resources Act in mid-October. This will provide the legal framework for the implementation of the SSF policy.

In recent weeks Masifundise and Coastal Links South Africa (CLSA) representatives have attended government meetings where this matter came up for discussion. As we were preparing for print, CLSA members were meeting in Durban to finalise its national constitution and to discuss its role in the implementation process.

Masifundise Director Naseegh Jaffer said that CLSA had an important role to play in the unfolding process.

“CLSA must work with the department to identify bona fide fishers, so that those who genuinely qualify, do not slip through the cracks”, he said.

He said Coastal Links must also play a constructive role in helping to create community based legal entities – a task which cannot be left to the government alone.

“Members must take active steps to acquire skills to run the legal entities and serve on the co-management structures”, he added.

“Finally, CLSA must contribute to the formulation of permit conditions and regulations that will govern small-scale fishers,” he concluded.

Bethwel Sithole, national treasurer of Coastal Links, said Masifundise Development Trust and CLSA should work hard to ensure that the SSF policy is properly implemented in a way that it improves the lives of small-scale fishers.

Masifundise has called on everyone in the small-scale sector to act with unity and purpose stating that “our futures depend on it.”
On this page, we provide some background and information about Masifundise Development Trust, an NGO with a long track record of working for empowerment of people and communities.

**OUR VISION**

Our vision is one of empowered fishing communities with sustainable livelihoods, where all live in a democratic and socially just environment.

**Our core work is in the following areas:**

- Popular Research and Awareness
- Advocacy
- Building organisation
- Empowering small-scale fishing communities

We work closely with Coastal Links, a grassroots movement for small-scale fishers, which we established in 2004. CLSA was established as a national organisation in November 2012.

**Some Key Achievements**

- Successfully seeking an Equality Court ruling in 2006 that ordered the inclusion of rights for small-scale fishers in long-term fishing policy.
- The adoption by Cabinet in June 2012 of the Small-Scale Fisheries (SSF) policy, for which we campaigned.
- The establishment of Coastal Links as a national organisation, in November 2012.
- The consolidation of global links in Africa and beyond.
- Most of our submissions have been incorporated into the set of International Guidelines on small-scale fishing by the Food and Agricultural Organisation's Committee on Fisheries (FAO).

**Communications**

Masifundise is steadily building its communication unit, using multiple platforms for relaying its messages.

Working closely with Coastal Links SA, MDT uses social media, interacts with mainstream media – both print and electronic – and produces Fishers Net quarterly. Last month, the first Pan African Fishers Net was produced and it is to be distributed across the continent. It appeared in English and French.

My colleague, Nosipho Singiswa has travelled to many communities in recent months to take photos and do interviews, said MDT communication consultant Mansoor Jaffer. “These have included, Dwesa, Hobeni, Centane, Doringhaai, Ebenhaeser, Papendorp, Paternoster, Langebaan, St Helena Bay, Port Edward and Port St Johns”.

The communication unit is producing banners and a series of video clips.

**Pan African Programme**

The second CAMFA (Conference of African Ministers on Fisheries and Aquaculture) meeting - where all the fishery ministers from the continent gather to discuss how fisheries should be managed - is scheduled to take place in February 2014. As we approach this meeting the World Bank and the African Union have been very active in promoting the wealth-based fisheries model on the continent. Such a system would in effect mean the privatisation of the seas, leading to corporate take-over and the dispossession of fisher folk from the resources they have depended on for generations.

Small-scale fishers in Africa are particularly vulnerable, as in most instances they are not well-organised and don't have much of a political voice. There is a great need to raise political consciousness amongst fisher organisations and fishers themselves on what the reality of wealth-based fisheries will mean for them, in order for them to mobilise fishing communities in opposing this system. If the fishers are silent, this system will most likely be implemented in many African countries, destroying livelihoods and food security in many coastal and lakeshore communities.

As part of our Pan African Programme work Masifundise has collaborated with two of our partner organisations (in Uganda and the Seychelles) to produce a Pan African Fishers Net newsletter (the first edition!), for distribution to all our partner organisations in Africa, as well as other relevant stakeholders. We hope that with a new awareness of the reality facing us as fishers, and increased dialogue between organisations, that communities will move forward in solidarity to oppose corporate greed and the disregard for our traditional right to make a living from fishing.

**People who keep the wheels turning**

Without a doubt, all staff contribute to Masifundise's growth and success. But in this edition, we focus on three members who play a huge role in keeping the organisation going.

Nomonde Mbunye, Linda Herman and Yazini Kona, have the difficult responsibility of ensuring that the administration and finances run smoothly.

Nomonde Mbunye, the office manager, has served for six years and Yazini Kona, the financial director, is the longest serving member of the MDT, having been with the organisation for eleven years. Nomonde, the office manager, has served for six years and Yazini has been doing financial administration since 2010.

The staff and small-scale fishers around the country, owe them a debt of gratitude for their tireless support work.
Small-scale fishers in Langebaan are heading to court to assert their rights to fish for a living.

Traditional Net Fishers in Langebaan stand a real chance of losing their livelihoods, if they are not allowed to catch fish in Zone B in the Langebaan Lagoon, where most of the harders are to be found, instead of being restricted to only catch their fish in Zone A.

The restrictions are set out in the conditions to the exemptions which allow them to fish in the Langebaan Lagoon.

Norton Dowries, vice chairperson of Coastal Links in Langebaan, which represents the traditional net fishers, said it was with great disappointment that they received these conditions to their exemptions at the beginning of 2013, and that they now approach the Western Cape High Court for relief.

“The restrictions imposed by the conditions, particularly the limit to Zone A, severely compromises our ability to support ourselves and our families through our customary fishing practices,” said Dowries.

The Langebaan Net Fishing community consists of about 300 people whose predecessors have been fishing for centuries in the areas. They mainly target harders.

Over time, the authorities decided to change Langebaan into a major tourist destination, but, this, together with the Group Areas Act, displaced many traditional net fishers.

Holiday makers now started to interfere in the fishing practices of the net fishers, and a line in the sea was drawn to separate the net fishers from the holiday makers, dividing the lagoon into Zone A and B, and when the Lagoon was declared a Marine Protected Area (MPA) another line was drawn in Zone B, creating a Zone C, where no catching was allowed.

Net fishers are not allowed to fish in Zone B and Zone C, making them to compete against recreational fishers and other holiday makers in Zone A to earn a living.

“Theyir lines, boats and equipment regularly get caught in our nets, and they chase the harders away into Zone B,” said Dowries.

They now fish at night, and by law they must use lights, which chase the harders away, and the lights attract seals which attack their fish.

Langebaan have seven commercial net fishing permits, and, through the courts, they were issued with three interim relief permits which allow another seven fishers to fish on the three permits.

“We do not have a problem with Zone C being a no-catch area in the MPA, but, there is no need to make Zone B also a no-take area, and conservation should not be applied at the expense of poor communities”, said Blake.

Dowries said that they caught fish in Zone B until recently, the Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries allowed them to fish in Zone B during the festive season and over Easter, this has now been withdrawn.

“All we want is for the court to direct the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, the deputy director general of the Fisheries Branch of the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, the Minister of Environmental Affairs, the Deputy Director General of the Coastal Management Branch of the Department of Environmental Affairs, SANParks and West Coast National Parks to allow us to fish in Zone B, so that we can earn a sustainable livelihood,” said Dowries.

The fishers are being represented by the Legal Resources Centre.
**COASTAL LINKS NEWS**

Face2Face

with Bethwel Sithole from Kwazulu Natal

Q Where are you from Mr Sithole?
A I am from Kwazulu Natal a place called Matikulu.

Q When did you get involved with Coastal Links SA and how?
A Sam Masinga, the MDT KZN field worker introduced the organisation to us, the fisherman from KZN, through a workshop he held in 2012.

Q What position are you holding in Coastal Links?
A I am currently the Treasurer of the National Executive Committee of CL.

Q As a fisherman, what do you catch and what do you use to fish?
A I catch line fish, and I use the rod and reel to catch fish.

Q What kind of issues are you currently faced with as fisherfolk in KZN?
A We currently can only catch fish to eat and not to sell. The fish allocation is at a minimum and so we even struggle with food sustainability. Also, we are currently facing a problem with KZN Wildlife who is trying to recruit us to become part of their structure.

Q What are the possible solutions to these issues?
A We have to ensure the SSF policy is implemented and we get authority to sell the fish we catch. Furthermore, we have to strengthen CL and register it as an organisation.

Q Do you have a gender balance in the structure or do you think that there should be more to be done to achieve this?
A No, that is not a problem. Our challenge is with youth participation. Youth do not see a future in fisheries, but they forget that the resources we find in the sea are in demand. People are looking for fresh fish all the time.

Q As KZN Fisherfolk, what are your goals as a province to bring about change?
A We are working for development in the fishing industry where people have jobs and food to eat.

Q What should CL and MDT focus on presently?
A It can focus on the issue of permits, policies and how we can be ready and push for the proper implementation of the SSF policy.

Q In what way can CL be a better organisation?
A At the moment I only see the progressive nature of the organisation. But we still do need resources, such as communication tools for a better organisation.

Q What are your thoughts on the policy?
A I am concerned whether the policy will be able to cater for the traditional rights of the indigenous people, who have survived from marine resources. Also, some people may be confused whether to go for a co-op or individual quota.

Coastal Links prepares for the next phase

Coastal Links South Africa has set its sights on strengthening its structures and playing a dynamic role in the implementation of the small-scale fisheries policy.

On 20 August 2013, Coastal Links National and Provincial Executive Committees from the Kwazulu Natal (KZN), Northern Cape (NC), Eastern Cape (EC) and Western Cape (WC) met in Port Elizabeth for a two day workshop. The Coastal Links South Africa (CLSA) Constitution and the way forward for the organisation were on the agenda.

Masifundise programme staff were there to facilitate the workshop and also guide the members of CLSA to bring about effective discussions regarding the finalisation and adoption of the CLSA constitution. The workshop was preceded by a national central committee workshop that will see the organisation’s constitution being adopted, thus affirming CLSA as a legal structure representing Small-Scale Fishers in South Africa.

“It’s about time that the constitution of CLSA is developed and adopted so that we small-scale fishers can be recognised as important citizens and for the organisation to be a legal entity” commented Bethwel Sithole a CLSA member from Kwazulu Natal.

On 8 November 2012, Coastal Links South Africa was officially formed, and what started in 2004 in Langebaan with six towns, became 150 towns in Port Elizabeth, where the organisation included fishers from Eastern Cape, Kwazulu Natal and Northern Cape as part of the launch of CLSA.

At the Masifundise AGM in April 2013, Christian Adams, CLSA chairperson said the growth was phenomenal, but that this also brought greater responsibility.

The constitution of CLSA touches on issues such as the sustainable living conditions of communities in coastal villages; membership, the adoption of the name “Coastal Links by all provinces and how CLSA can engage government to review oppressive laws and policies that directly affect small-scale fishers and communities.

CLSA met in KZN from 16–18 September 2013, at a central national workshop to discuss and adopt their constitution and form a legal entity representing small-scale fishers in South Africa.
Small-scale fishers are organising countrywide, through Coastal Links SA. On this page, we get a glimpse into the groups that are active in various coastal towns.

Cathy Thomas, seated front, the chairperson of St Helena Coastal Links, with members of the organisation, in Laingville during August.

Nonhlele Xola, chairperson of CL in Hobeni, talks to Mcebisi Kraai, Eastern Cape field worker for MDT.

These four fishermen get their skippers licences, thanks to the help of CLSA.

Delegates at the Port Elizabeth National Executive Committee.
The sun is shining but the day is cold, leaving us with a bitter sweet feeling as we travelled the long, straight road from Cape Town to Doringbaai last month.

Driver Hahn Goliath, Masifundise’s field worker in the Western Cape, knows the road very well. After passing Elands Bay, he detours into private roads promising me they would take us to our destination quicker.

We arrive in Doringbaai in the evening, there is a chill outside and I turn on the gas stove to warm up my room.

Doringbaai is a charming little fishing village that used to be known as Thornbay. It is situated on the West Coast of South Africa, neighbouring the well known towns of Lamberts Bay and Strandfontein, about 300 km from Cape Town.

Before it was established the bay was used as an anchorage on the sea-trading route and provisions off-loaded from the boats were transported to the inland town of Vanrhynsdorp, past Vredendal, by camels.

The lighthouse built in 1963, is one of the prominent features of Doringbaai and the remnants of a thriving fish processing factory still stands, lambasted by waves during winter.

The village has about 2000 people living in it. They make a living from the packaging and export of crayfish and the town’s economy is closely linked to the operations of the crayfish factory.

Ukondleka, meaning to be fed/nourished, is a secondary cooperative started in 2008 by the small-scale fishers of Doringbaai. It includes fishers from Papendorp and Ebenhaezer. Ukondleka Secondary Cooperative (USC) was established when MDT and Coastal Links (CLSA) held workshops on how co-operatives could assist small-scale fishers.

The fisherman then worked together with MDT and Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA) to formalise the cooperative with only 20 beneficiaries. They managed to attract start up capital/resources such as boats and storage facilities from the local government, Department of Trade and Industry and other stake holders.

USC harvests lobster, line fish and white mussel. They also market these resources to sustain the co-operative. The project has grown to a point where it generates more than R2 million annually and has grown from 20 beneficiaries to 125 fisher people directly benefiting from the project.

Currently USC has some challenges. “We would like to obtain training for sustainable fishing practise and also skills on how to manage a business, so that we can grow and effectively manage a successful cooperative” said Riaan Coetze, a CLSA member and USC committee member.

“Our aim is to build and sustain a foundation that will change the life of many children and bring back the respect for fishers as providers for their families,” commented Hahn Goliath MDT field worker and member of the co-operative.

“The co-operative is a legacy for the next generation, it will provide our communities especially us fishermen with the ‘bread’ that we need to feed our families and sustain our livelihoods,” added Sylvester Don, also a member of the USC and a CLSA member.

The late Pieter Cloete shared knowledge about the development of co-operatives to the fishers of Doringbaai, Papendorp and Ebenhaeser, if he were alive today, I am sure he would be proud of his fellow fishermen, and those who looked up to him as a leader and a mentor,” said Sylvester.

The small-scale fishing policy requires communities to move away from individual transferable quotas to community quotas, thus encouraging the establishment of co-operatives. Ukondleka Secondary Co-operative have done just that, and are proving that this way can and is working and small-scale fishers should work together and speak with one voice in order to have sustainable livelihoods and food security for themselves and for the next generation.

Nosipho works in the Masifundise Development Trust’s Communication Unit. Part of her duties is to visit communities to do interviews and take photographs. These are used in publications and on social media.
**school of FISHERS**

**WE HAVE Fought Ten Long Years To Get Government to Adopt a Good Policy for Small-Scale Fishers. Now It’s Implementation Time and We Expect Government to Move Fast!**

**WE WANT TO ENSURE That We Can Support Ourselves and Our Families Through Fishing.**

**GOVERNMENT HAS A BIG ROLE, BUT WE ALSO HAVE A PART TO PLAY.**

**WE MUST FOLLOW THE REGULATIONS AND PERMIT CONDITIONS...**

**WE MUST FISH RESPONSIBLY BY NOT CATCHING UNDERSIZED FISH OR MORE THAN THE BAG LIMIT ALLOWED.**

**LET US PREPARE AND SUBMIT ACCURATE REPORTS.**

**UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD We POLLUTE THE WATER OR THE SHORELINE.**

**VERY IMPORTANTLY, LET US LEARN NEW SKILLS, SO THAT WE ARE ABLE TO MANAGE AND ADMINISTER SMALL CO-OPERATIVES OR BUSINESSES WELL.**
Port St Johns: Where stunning scenery and grinding poverty meet

In our series on coastal towns, we put the spotlight on Port St. Johns, a small town with a vibrant fishing community. It is situated in Pondoland, in the deep rural areas of the Eastern Cape, on the banks of the Mzimvubu River.

PORT ST JOHNS is a town of about 5000 people on the Wild Coast of the Eastern Cape, with a coastline of about 270km, with some of the most beautiful scenery found anywhere in the world, right at the mouth of the Mzimvubu River.

It is 220 kilometres northeast of East London and 70 kilometres east of Mthatha, where Coastal Links members make a living by catching mainly kob from the shores of the Atlantic Ocean and the banks of the Mzimvubu River.

The Mzimvubu River flows through the impressive ‘Gates of St John’ gorge into an estuary located on the Indian Ocean, and, flanked on both sides by two high sandstone mountain peaks, Mount Thesiger, and Mount Sullivan.

It has a humid subtropical climate, and has sunshine and moderate rain all year round, making it a good holiday destination for anytime of the year.

The river mouth was used as a port until the 1940’s, when it became too shallow for vessels to land and launch at the port.

The town is known as the centre of tourism on the Wild Coast, and it is famous for deep sea fishing and shore angling.

It is home to the mainly Xhosa speaking amaPondo, and it is the main settlement in the Port St. Johns Municipality in the Eastern Cape.

Local fishers, who are mainly shore anglers, on the shores of the Indian Ocean and the Mzimvubu, said they have an uphill battle to make a living.

Soweto Jabavu, chairperson of the local Coastal Links branch said that they are only issued with subsistence permits, allowing them to only catch 20kg of fish per day.

Jabavu, who is 61 years old, said that he has been a fisherman all his life, and that all his children are fishing for a living.

“When I was not fishing, I worked in the bushes, cutting trees and making baskets,” said Jabavu.

Mncebisi Kraai, the Masifundise fieldworker in Port St. Johns, said that Coastal Links has 300 members, and that their main problem is with fishing permits, and that they are working towards having the fishers recognised as small-scale fishers.

The main fish species caught by the fishers are the kob, “… and garrick, grunger and crayfish are also caught occasionally, and the women take out white mussel,” said Kraai.

Kraai said there are high levels of poverty in Port St Johns, and that people are mainly employed in informal trading and the tourism industry.

“Coastal Links is organising our members to form co-operatives so that we can engage the department of fisheries as small scale fishers, and not as subsistence fishers,” said Jabavu.

Port St Johns hosts the 500km² Pondoland National Park, which stretches towards the provincial border of KwaZulu Natal, and monkeys, buck, blue duiker, springbok and over 200 species of birds, animals and flowers can be found all over the area.

Port St Johns has a small airport, and is accessed by a small five kilometre road from the R11, after you have either travelled from Mthatha in the West or Flagstaff on the North.

Sources: www.southafrica.net/za/en/articles/, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Port_St_Johns, Mr Soweto Jabavu, Mr Mncebisi Kraai