Editor’s Notes

A critical time for small-scale fishers

Welcome to the first edition of FishersNet for 2016. It is the newsletter of Masifundise Development Trust and Coastal Links South Africa.

For those of you who do not know, the President signed off on the amended Marine Living Resources Act on Friday 26 February. This has paved the way for the finalisation of regulations to guide the implementation of the Small-scale fisheries policy.

It took more than a decade of struggle and advocacy to see the policy finally adopted and the MLRA amended.

It is a good policy which gives small-scale fisher legal recognition for the first time in their history. It has the potential to bring social justice to the sector.

Today we just have one rallying call: Implement! Implement! Implement!

From our experience, we can expect more obstacles. For example, the recent Fishing Rights Allocation Process for the commercial sector is likely to end up reducing the allocations of the small-scale fishing sector. Masifundise and Coastal Links are making representation in this regard.

But for us, there is no turning back now. We have to join hands in united action.

In the last FishersNet, we said: “The realisation of our dreams does rely on the mercy of government and the private sector alone. We also have to prepare ourselves, get empowered and work in unity.

We need to follow the process of implementation and get involved. We must do our own research. We must work in solidarity with each other. We must set up legal entities that can benefit many, instead of enriching a selected few.”

As our goal draws slowly closer, this is no time to falter. Unite and act with one voice!

Benefits of mainstreaming small-scale fisheries

The mainstreaming of the small-scale fishing sector and the implementation of the new policy can enhance food security and generate increased foreign revenue through exports.

So said Craig Smith, Director for Small-Scale Fisheries Management in the Fisheries Management Branch of the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF).

“Co-operatives working closely with government have the potential to reduce illegal harvesting and thereby increasing resources for the benefit of all,” said Smith.

Smith said most of the preparatory work for implementation has been concluded, and that the president had signed the promulgation to the Amended Marine Living Resources Act.

“We are now able to publish the approved Regulations, make the final call for communities to register their expression of interest, and to announce the community visitation schedule.

He said the verification process in communities could start before the end of March 2016.

Mr Smith said that the implementation will consist of a single roll-out that will happen over a period, but that there will be pilot roll-outs in one or two communities per region, before a full-scale roll-out will happen a week or two later.

The verification process will be used to identify small-scale fishers in small-scale fishing communities. Up to this stage more than 270 communities have already registered, but the process for communities to register with the Department is still open.

At this stage, fishers do not have to register, only communities have to register, and once a community is verified, the fishers linked to the community will have to register as members of the fishing community.

Members of fishing communities wishing to become part of their fishing communities must meet the following criteria:
- Must be a South African citizen
- Must be 18 years or older
- Must reside in the community
- Must have 10 years accumulated experience in fishing
- Must be dependent on marine living resources for their livelihoods

Smith said it did not matter where people live, whether they live in coastal communities, or towns away from the coast, as long as they meet the above criteria, and that fishing communities can be established in non-coastal towns, as long as there are enough fishers in the fishing communities.

“It would be advised that the non-coastal towns register a separate expression of interest. However, it should be remembered that if the coastal town does not have twenty or more...”
Voices from the Coast

On Co-management and legal entities
Co-management and community based legal entities (CBLEs) are two of the cornerstones of the new small-scale fishing policy. In this edition of FishersNet, some fishers give their opinions about these important matters.

SMANGALISO MAGEBA
KOSI BAY KWAZULU/NATAL

CBLEs refer to the different types of legal entities like co-ops, community trusts, and co-management refers to the partnerships amongst different stakeholders with the same objectives. The thing with co-management is that each stakeholder has to take part in the management of a resource or company or whatever that needs to be managed so as to be successful.

FLORINA ALBERTYN
HAWSTON, WESTERN CAPE

In our case a number of entities might work, it all depends on the skills and knowledge that our community members possess. I might say a co-op might work, but you will find that other community members might think otherwise. At the end of it all what matters is the commitment of the community, and how we manage the entity and resources so as to run a successful CBLE.

AYANDA YEKANI
EAST LONDON, EASTERN CAPE

Government officials must be close to the people and have transparent and effective public participation processes. They should set up activities that will educate the community and in return the community should take part in every public participation process activity and also come up with their own activities in order to better manage their entities.

ELROY ADAMS
PORT NOLLOTH, NORTHERN CAPE

Co-management is a good thing, and it is provided for in the small-scale fishing policy. We however have a problem with the department that has to implement the co-management programme.

They cancelled or postponed the community consultations without consulting or even informing us, that is not co-management.

Face 2 Face

with
Rovina Marthinus

Q Where are you from?
A Arniston, Western Cape

Q Favourite Food and Music?
A I love some chicken curry and you can give me some Gospel and jazz anytime.

Q How did you become part of Coastal Links South Africa?
A My family are fishers and my husband and in laws (Fanie and Dora Swart) were part of Masifundise programmes. This is how I became an active member of CLSA in 2003/4

Q How has being part of CLSA/Masifundise changed your life?
A Masifundise has changed my life in so many ways. I was and am exposed to so many opportunities like representing fishers in international conferences, meeting people facing the same small-scale fishing problems and then exchanging ideas on how to solve those problems. Through these opportunities I have been empowered.

Q Do you think your community is ready for the implementation of the SSFP?
A We are ready, we can’t wait for the implementation, we have been ready for a long time.

Q Has your community submitted an ‘Expression of Interest’ form, and has it been verified by DAFF?
A Yes, we did but we are not verified yet, the service providers will still come to our town.

Q Do you think your community members understand the SSFP policy implementation process?
A I am not sure, but what I can say is that even though the department published a book on the process, they need to come to our communities and host workshops, where community members can ask question so to be totally clear on how things will go.

Q What are your thoughts on DAFF’s proposal that communities should open cooperatives in preference to other forms of legal entities.
A Co-ops would work in our town as long as we work together. In fact no matter what CBLE we open, if the community is together we will be successful.

Q As a fisherfolk or a person living in a fishing community what challenges do you currently face?
A Currently we have a number of fishermen who do not get fishing rights, unemployed youth and women.

Q How do you forsee these challenges being resolved and do you see these challenges persist when the SSFP is implemented and rights issued?
A We are a fishing community and this is how we make most of our living, so these challenges will be resolved when the policy is implemented. A lot of fisher headed households will receive a sustainable income and there will be opportunities for the youth and women through the CBLEs and other post harvesting activities.
Fieldworker Nico Waldeck Moves on

Masifundise and Coastal Links members have bid farewell to field worker Nico Waldeck who moved on to new pastures in March.

Waldeck was with the organisation for more than ten years, mainly serving the West Coast region.

He indicated that he will initially dedicate some quality time with his family, before he starts making future plans.

Waldeck said he appreciated the opportunities afforded to him to be involved in the struggles of the small-scale fishers of South Africa and the world, which includes:

- Organising small-scale fishers, uniting them under the banner of Coastal Links, and helping in the building and growth of Coastal Links as a national organisation.
- Helping with the development and writing of the new small scale-fishing policy.
- The Oral History Project with the Olifants River Fishers, which was jointly done between Masifundise, the old Environmental Evaluation Unit at UCT and the Legal Resources Centre.
- The court challenges in which small scale-fishers took on the big commercial fishing companies who wanted to deny small scale fishers fishing rights.
- Work on the Abalobi Project, which aims to develop an App for small-scale fishers.
- The defiance campaign in Paternoster that unlocked positive talks between the fishers and DAFF.

Before working at Masifundise, Waldeck was involved in fishing, line fish, catching west coast lobster, doing deep sea fishing and long-line for a year, and he also worked in a pilchard canning factory, and through this he became involved in fishing and community struggles.

“Growing up in a fishers’ household I was from a very young age aware about the exploitation of fishers and how difficult it has become over the years for fishers to get access rights to their livelihoods. Since

verified small-scale fishers, it will not be considered as a small-scale fishing community.”

Smith said that the service providers will be responsible for: “Registration, verification, baseline studies, providing livelihood reports, provide training and assist co-ops to apply for fishing rights.”

“The fishing community registration will close after thirty days of the Regulations being published. Fishers will only have the one day to register when the Department visits the respective community that registered with the department.”

Smith said that more resources would be apportioned to the small-scale fishing sector than the commercial sector.

He believed that it was important that fishers should now make sure that their community submit expressions of interest. Check DAFF’s website to see if their communities are indeed registered (www.daff.gov.za). Fishers must also ensure that they are in possession of valid ID documents.

Smith said that the organisation recognised and appreciated the valuable contributions Nico has made to the struggles of fishers, not only locally, but also globally.

“He has been a cog in the wheel that has kept the struggle of fishers going, it is sad to lose him.”

At the beginning of the year, Luyanda Matuntuta, who was in the employ of Masifundise as a fieldworker for a brief period in 2015, also left our employ, and moved into a new job.

Masifundise and Coastal Links wished Luyanda and Nico well for their future plans.

Benefits of mainstreaming small-scale fisheries

“They should start thinking about their ten years of fishing history, including all the relevant details that go with their history, for example, the name of the vessel/s they worked on, skipper/s name/s, contact numbers of people that can verify their story, nature of their fishing history.”

“It would be important to work with the service providers, the fishing communities, fisher organisations and DAFF.”

Smith said the small scale fishing policy provided fishers and fishing communities with a range of benefits that include:

- Legal access to a basket of marine resources
- Food security
- A hub for commercial fishing
- Diversification of skills eg processing, marketing, eco-tourism etc
- Increase in jobs within the community
- Government support

Smith said there would be teething problems as with anything, but that the department would address them.

The process to implement the policy is now gaining momentum, and Smith issued the following statement recently: “Please note that the proclamation of the Amended MLRA and the SSF Regulations were published yesterday (8 March 2016) in the government gazette. Please note communities that have not registered have until 7 April to submit their expression of interest to the Department.”

Masifundise and Coastal Links South Africa (CLSA) have approached the DAFF to speedily announce the splits of the allocation of species between the small scale sector, the commercial sector and the recreational sector, as it seems that the present FRAP that is happening that most of the species will be allocated to the commercial sector, and the scraps to be reserved for the small scale fisheries sector. This is becoming especially urgent since the government has taken ages in implementing the small scale fisheries policy.
IN 2012, six co-operatives were formed in Lamberts Bay, benefiting small scale fishers who held Interim Relief permits.

The government through its Co-operative Incentive Scheme (CIS), a programme of the DTI, awarded up to R300 000 to each co-operative.

David Shoshola an Interim Relief rights holder and five other fellow small-scale fishers joined forces together and formed Coastal Fellas Fishing Co-operative, a primary co-operative.

“We are all small scale fishers with Interim Relief rights, except for one member, who is a near-shore rights holder, but, who is still a small-scale fisher,” said Shoshola.

Whether the co-operatives of Lamberts Bay are a success or not, still has to be measured, Shoshola believes, because it is something that he just cannot say off the cuff.

He can however point to some positive and negative aspects of the co-operatives, and is quick to point out that there is hope for the future.

For instance, he said one co-operative did not get funding through the CIS, because its members are not on Interim Relief.

“Fish-Tail Co-operative mainly focuses on post-harvesting activities.”

Shoshola said that he is encouraged by the spirit of the members of Fish-Tail Co-operative, because with little resources they pulled themselves together and built a successful enterprise.

“They are a group of men and women who buys our fish and sells it to old age homes, local fish and chips shops and other businesses.”

Shoshola said the activities of Fish-Tail allow much of the wealth they create as fishers to remain in the community, benefiting the community.

Fish Tail also sells bait to local fishers, and Shoshola said that although their bait are a bit more expensive, the fishers still buy their bait because of the mutual buying and selling between Fish Tail and the fishers.

Shoshola says that all the fishers on Interim Relief worked well together to get their co-operatives off the ground in 2012.

“We formed six co-operatives, each with six people in a co-operative, we got R300 000 from the government, with which we bought two boats per co-operative.”

In one season, Coastal Fellas made good business, and was able to buy a vehicle for the business.

“Some of our members have health problems and sometimes cannot get out to sea. We asked them to look at starting other businesses, while the other members of the co-operative will concentrate on catching the fish and the rock lobster.”

Shoshola says that Coastal Fellas were upfront from the beginning and made rules on how they were going to be managed and how the resources will be shared and distributed.

“We decided that right from the beginning to work for ourselves, and that we are not going to bind ourselves to any marketers.”

Shoshola said that although they sell their rock lobster to marketers, they are not bound by contracts, and should they one day be able to sell their rock lobster by themselves, they would be free to do so.

“As fishers, we are proud people and as members of Coastal Links (CLSA) we realise that we have to work for the future and that we need to do things properly from the start.”

When they got their boats, Shoshola said they decided that each member will pay the catching costs they would have paid should they have worked on someone else’s boat.

The money for the catching costs goes directly into the account of Coastal Fellas.

However, everything is not completely healthy with the co-operatives, and Shoshola said that there are many challenges facing them.

Shoshola said that once the money came in and the boats were bought, the co-operatives started to experience problems.

Some of the problems were also started by people in the community who started spreading stories that the leaders of the co-operatives were stealing and misusing the money and resources of the co-operatives.

“Most of the co-operatives are not functioning properly, some are bound to marketers, and some of the boats don’t go out to sea, and it seems like some have become white elephants.”

“Some fishers have their catching costs paid by the marketers, making them indebted to the marketers, and they almost get nothing by the time they catch their crayfish.”

And, even Coastal Fellas is having its fair share of challenges, with some not seeing the future of the co-operative in the same light as the other members.

“To become successful, the members in the co-operatives need to have a change in mind-set, doing things differently,” is Shoshola’s advice.
COASTAL Links continues to grow, in both membership and in setting up new branches in most of its provinces, according to Sithembiso Gwaza of Masifundise Development Trust.

CLSA are active in all four provinces of South Africa, and within every region of each province.

In the Western Cape there are 22 branches in the coastal communities of the south coast, the west coast and in the Cape Town metropolitan areas.

In the Eastern Cape there are 35 branches in many of the coastal villages along the Eastern Cape coastline.

KwaZulu Natal also has 35 branches in coastal villages along the coast and in the urban areas in and around Durban.

In the Northern Cape, where there are only two coastal towns, Coastal Links has branches in both Port Nolloth and Hondeklipbaai.

In all, Gwaza says that CLSA have about 4 000 members throughout South Africa, and that they are still recruiting new members, and at this stage that there are eight communities at this stage who wants to become part of CLSA, which includes Mossel Bay in the Western Cape and Benton Village in the Eastern Cape.

CLSA is a national organisation, with a National Executive Committee, and Provincial Executive Committees in the provinces.

At local level, the branches take care of the day-to-day issues that affect members at a local level.

Gwaza says that CLSA members and fishers need to get themselves ready for the implementation of the small-scale fishing policy, as that will become one of the most important issues for 2016, and fishers should not have to find themselves outside of the process.

“At the moment, Masifundise and CLSA are equipping ourselves and getting ready for the implementation of the small-scale fishing policy.”

We are busy producing a manual and video on co-operatives, as our main focus will be on education, capacity building and information sharing."

“We must make others aware; fishers must organise themselves and attend meetings to get proper and up-to-date information.”

Masifundise entered into a contract with the European Union (EU) last year for a project that entails empowerment and job creation in twenty fishing communities across the country. The project forms part of the advocacy and organisational development work Masifundise has been engaged in over many years. This particular project began last year and ends in two years’ time.

The Project, funded by the EU, is about creating jobs and sustainable livelihoods through the implementation of the Small-Scale Fishery (SSF) Policy.

“With this project we aim to ensure that there is a formation of empowered cooperatives that are capable of taking active part in the co-management of fisheries and benefitting from the creation of jobs and livelihood opportunities in 20 fishing communities”, said project manager Mandla Gqamlana.

“It will also document lessons and best case practices of cooperatives already established in one community in order to scale up, and fast track economic development and job creation in other communities,” he said.

He added: “Another prerogative for us is to improve co-operation with different government departments such as the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), in order to ensure governmental commitment and human and financial resources for the successful implementation of the SSF policy, including job creation.”

The delay in the implementation of the SSF policy has caused a delay in the project, because the two are closely linked. But already a booklet on Community Based Legal Entities (CBLE’s) has been produced as well as a video on best practices. The latter deals with the cooperatives of Doringbaai.

A baseline survey which provides details of the small-scale sector and two exchange visits has also been completed.

A big focus of the project will be skills training in the twenty communities, and relationship-building between the fishers, government and civil society groups. The manuals and videos will help with the training processes. The aim is to empower fishers so that they are able to participate meaningfully in economic activity.
New technology might transform small-scale fishing
App connects fishers, scientists and fishery management

It has been a long road for small-scale fishers in their pursuit of increased rights and recognition, with bureaucratic processes halting the implementation of the small-scale fisheries policy.

The policy is set to be implemented soon and a new mobile app, called Abalobi, is using this new policy environment to record fishing activity and connect fishers, scientists and fishery

This took another two years. Small-scale fishing regulations which have now been approved, paving the way for the amended bill to finally be promulgated, following which the regulations will be published.

A central tenet of the policy is enabling the co-management of the fisheries sector. The Abalobi team, which is a partnership between the University of Cape Town, The Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries and small scale fishers themselves, believes that one way that this can be done is through fishers collecting data and sharing it with other fishers, scientists and fishery management.

Abalobi's director and UCT project leader Dr Serge Raemaekers says that the app is simply a “conduit” through which “local beliefs, local knowledge and local images” of small-scale fishers can be included in fishing management decisions.

In the app, fishers can record all the information related to their catch such as the weight of the catch, where it was caught, what species it is, the sea conditions and their income and expenses. Eventually the app will also have a communication and safety at sea component and will also be able to connect fishers to suppliers.

The small fishing village of Struisbaai is one of the five areas where Abalobi is being piloted.

Niklaas Joorst, a skipper, is one of the five fishers in Struisbaai involved in the pilot of Abalobi. He believes that the app “will help a lot of people” if all fishers in Struisbaai could use it, with one of the major benefits being able to set prices amongst the fishers so that they have increased bargaining power. In the bigger picture this would also mean that the information that fisheries management get is accurate, up-to-date and reflective of all fishers in the sea.

Joorst puts all his data into the app when he comes back from sea, saying that it has helped him a lot as he is able to go back over his data every month – looking at income, expenses and his catch.

The Abalobi system would make the notorious “blue books” obsolete. The “blue books” are where fishers currently record data pertaining to their catch – a process that is time consuming and often does not result in adequate feedback to the fishers themselves.

“The Abalobi is a much better system,” says Joorst.

This is something that Josias Marthinus, a catch data monitor in Struisbaai agrees with. Marthinus’ job is to record data from each fisher’s catch, such as the weight of the catch and the species, which is then given to the department.

Currently he has to write everything out by hand and the data is only collected once a month. “We sit with the data the whole month,” he says, “I use many [pieces of] paper per boat.” Marthinus has now been equipped with a tablet loaded with the Abalobi app, meaning that with a couple of clicks he is able to fill in the data for each fisher’s catch.

Marthinus says that the data captured on the app can help fishers secure bank loans to fix their boats and can also aid in paying taxes as they now have detailed data on their income and expenses.

The data from various fishers using the app can also be combined to create a picture of the Struisbaai fishery, something that Stuart du Plessis, the Struisbaai project manager and implementation leader, says never happened before.

“[Before the app] When fishers sent information [about their catch] away, it was never returned. They will never see [its effect],” he says.

Du Plessis says that fishers are given things such as quotas and a total allowable catch but that the fishers do not know where the data for these restrictions came from or how the final allowances were worked out.

“It is of vital importance that these communication groups come together and support and increase the trust amongst them,” he said.

Mistrust between small-scale fishers, scientists and fisheries management is a perennial problem say both Raemaekers and du Plessis.

Raemaekers explains that scientists often believe that fishers are going to under- or over-report, depending on circumstances, because they will benefit more from doing this. “The current setup doesn’t work too well. We need to turn it around – looking at ownership, looking at co-producing, looking at partnerships,” he said.

The policy provides the framework for this, but the app is a method by which it can actually be facilitated.

Du Plessis believes that the app is “brilliant” and “is definitely going to revolutionise the fishing industry”.

While the app is still in its pilot stage, the team is hoping it will soon be available for download so that every small-scale fisher can use it. As for its future, Raemaekers insists that the fishers will be the ones who dictate the direction it takes.

*This article first appeared on GroundUp on the 24 of February 2016, it is written by Ashleigh Furlong and Masixole Feni.
Today I got a lot of knowledge about legal entities and how we need to work together with the government to make sure that we run successful CBLEs.

Yes, me too Thozama. I thought with the implementation of the policy, our communities will just have to run their own legal entities without any help.

It is good to know that different government departments will work with us to build and run our legal entities.

Yes, it’s like sharing power with the government, we’ll make joint decisions relating to rights and responsibilities for better management of our entities.

But what if government overpowers us when it comes to decision-making?

We should take charge and as communities, we should come up with our own co-management arrangements.

Yes, as much as we will work together with the government, the community should take charge and lead the government.

True, these legal entities belong to the community and it is communities who should benefit the most.

Yes, no decision should be made for us, without us!
Kraal fishing, a traditional fishing method, century’s old – is in existence along the Orange River, and is an important source of livelihoods.

Masifundise encountered this practice for the first time in 2013, when it started working with Rhodes University and the Northern Cape government on a fishery project at Vanderkloof Dam in the Northern Cape.

Masifundise worker Michelle Joshua, and other staff have made several visits to the area in the last year. The kraal fishery is separate from the broader government project, but it has significant potential to generate income.

“When the fishers showed us the kraal fishing at the dam, we realised that we saw a method that has been in existence for hundreds of years,” said Joshua.

Joshua said that this had led Masifundise to look at doing some brief research, and what has come out is that the whole Orange River, from the Eastern Cape right up to places like Prieska in the Northern Cape are full of fish kraals, left there by the ancestors of the present-day Khoi and San communities.

Fishers from Luckhoff in the Free State, who also fish at the Vanderkloof Dam, say that just around the corner from them, there are also fish kraals, but that a farmer denies them access to the river, although it is government property.

Johannes Coetze (Basie), the chairperson of the Luckhoff Vissers Gemeenskap, said they found the fish kraals there.

Who built it they do not know, but that it was built by their forefathers he is certain of since their parents and grandparents harvested fish from the kraals in the river.

Joshua said that they have now approached the minister of Water and Sanitation to have the kraals at the dam legalised, and to allow the fishers to empty the kraals.

“Kraal One is the most productive of all the kraals at the dam, but also in a security zone, and the most contentious.

“All the kraals together produce enough fish every day to feed the four different communities of Keurkieskloof, Phillipstown, Luckhoff and Petrusville,” says Joshua.

Joshua says that the fishers have now organised themselves into community fishing organisations, so that they can address their issues with the authorities.

In three of the four communities there are fishers committees, and they have come up with proposals to address the security issues in the security zone.

The major concern of the authorities at the dam is that fishers can be caught in the rush of water when the dam opens its turbines.

Raphel Benadie, chairperson of the Keurkieskloof Vissers Gemeenskap Organisatie, says this is not true, since there has not been an accident in more than 40 years.

“A siren goes off when the turbines are to be opened, the fishers are then usually not in the water because they only empty the kraals once the turbines are closed,” said Benadie.

Joshua said that kraal fishing is a traditional method of fishing that should be protected by government legislation, but that it comes more and more under threat from people who wish to deny the small scale fishers from earning sustainable livelihoods for selfish interests.

Joshua said the kraals had been broken down many times, but, because people do not have any other means to earn a living, they just rebuild them.