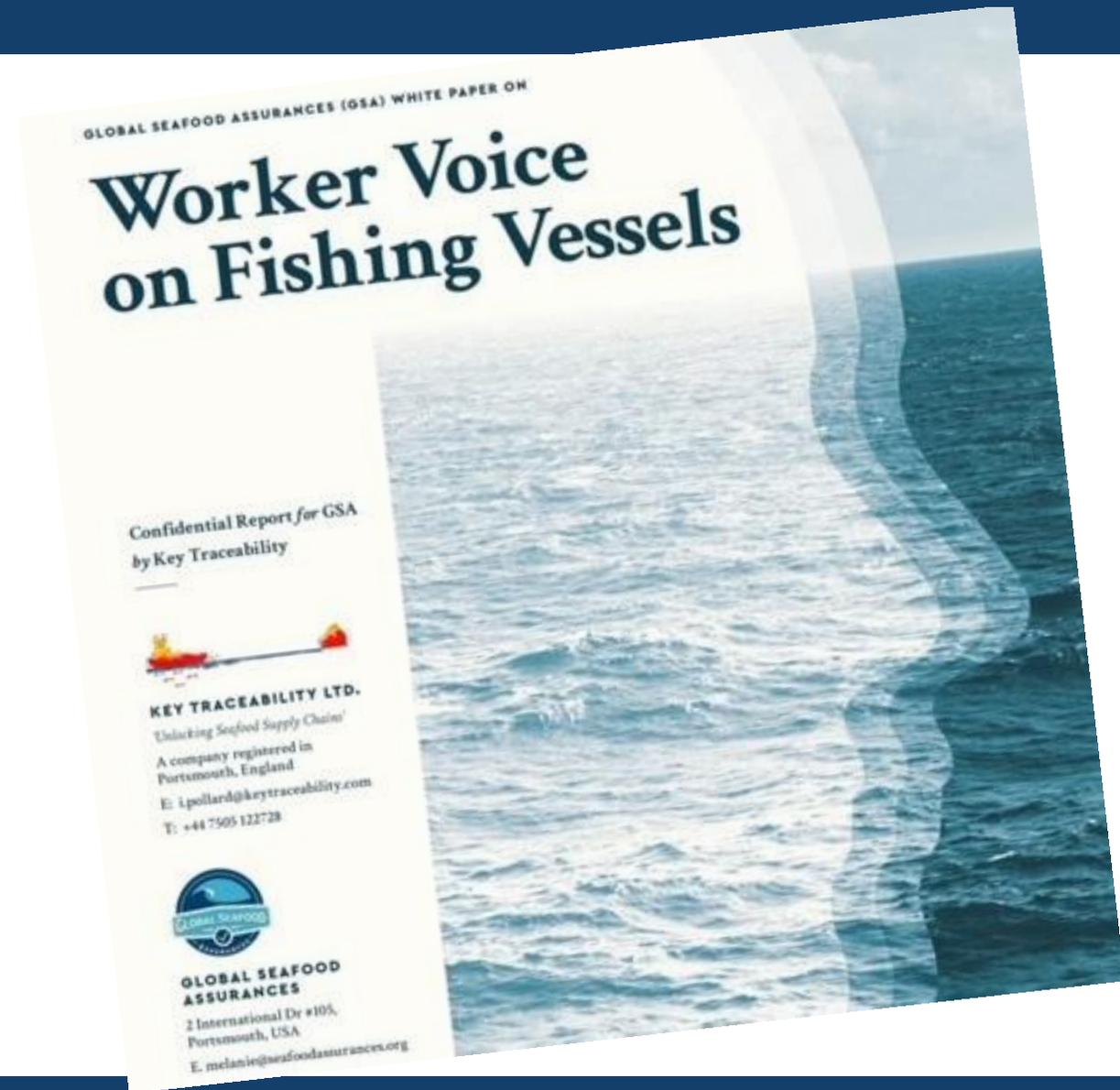




Worker Voice on Fishing Vessels

A project to collate global understanding and experience of mechanisms typically known as Worker Voice or Grievance Mechanism, as they relate to crews on fishing vessels

Led by Global Seafood Assurances
working with
Key Traceability
Released November 2020





Background

Global Seafood Assurances (GSA) is an independent, not-for-profit organization seeking to provide comprehensive, credible seafood supply chain assurances while addressing gaps in seafood certification.

Those assurances will flow from third-party certification programs that ensure your seafood supplies meet strict environmental, social and food safety standards

Draws on 20 years experience of assurance and advocacy by Global Aquaculture Alliance



The Responsible Fishing Vessel Standard

Environmental Management of fisheries



**Vessel Management including safety, recruitment,
crew welfare and well being**



Ports



Processing

Responsible Fishing Vessel Standard (RFVS)



Leading

The RFVS is a world leading certification program helping the industry showcase best practices through independent, third-party auditing.



Responsible

The RFVS is a fishing vessel-based program certifying high standards of vessels management and safety systems including crew rights, safety and well being.



Credible

Created through a rigorous and transparent development process in compliance with the International Organization of Standardization (ISO) requirements.



Global

The RFVS is the only vessel level certification program available on a global scale.



Accessible

The RFVS program categorizes vessels by length of time at sea as this is the key factor in determining crew health, safety and well-being. This will ensure that the standard is accessible for all types of commercial fishing vessels.



Benchmarked

The RFVS will be independently validated by pursuing relevant third party **benchmarking**.

The Worker Voice project

What should we expect as a minimum if we want to ensure the crews of fishing vessels have safe access to third party advice and remediation where necessary?

“Power imbalance is massive on fishing vessels; you need a safe form of reference on the vessel as well as a support network and trusted authority on land.”



Methodology

- Development and consultation of an Advisory Group
- In-country Outreach Support
- Stakeholder mapping
- Data collection:
 - Desk-based literature review on best-practice approaches to facilitating Worker Voice and Grievance Mechanisms on fishing vessels;
 - Semi-structured interviews
 - Multilingual structured survey
 - Analysis and reporting
- Analysis and reporting

The Survey - introduction

- Global Seafood Assurances (GSA) <https://seafoodassurances.org/> believe that those working on fishing vessels should have safe access to a third party mechanism, as maybe needed to seek, good advice, raise issues, hear grievances and resolve them. These types of mechanisms are often referred to as Worker Voice or Grievance Mechanism.
- The GSA are carrying out a global project to understand what is meant by these and similar terms, as they relate to those working on fishing vessels, and further to collate evidence of mechanisms in place.

4. Are you familiar with any of the following terms? Tick which ones and explain your understanding of what it means:

	In general	In fisheries and fisheries workers (not including processing plants)
- Worker Voice		
- Grievance mechanism		
- Grievance procedure		
- Hotline		
- Worker empowerment tools		
- Works committee		
- Collective organising		
- Worker feedback technology		
- Worker engagement		
- Confidential worker interviews		
- Freedom of association		
- Fish Worker Trade Unions		
- Complaints box		
- Due diligence tools		
- Participative management		
- Worker representative		
- Worker Committee		
- Social Dialogue		

The Survey example questions

9. In the fisheries you work with (relating to the 5 countries listed in question 3), are you aware if crews have a grievance how they resolve this with the boat owner? If you are unaware of a mechanism please state 'unaware'

- - Country
 - Country
 - Country
 - Country
 - Country
 - Other

- 10. In the fisheries you work with, do fishing vessel crews have a worker representative who? Please state the country in which you refer to from your top 5 countries and tell us about that representation.

The Survey example questions

Survey outreach and response

9 languages

7 in country representatives

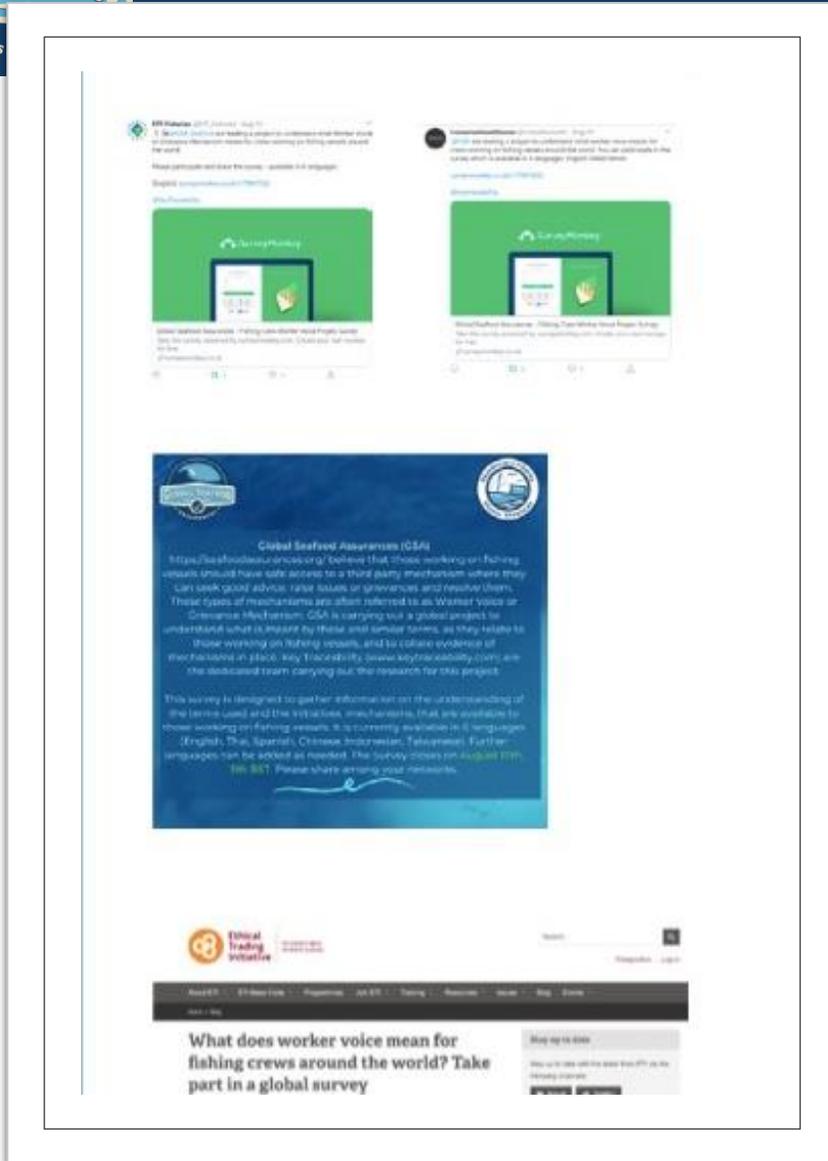
Experience from 47 countries represented in responses

Responses limited

Outreach via in-country representatives, AG, KT and AG networks and social media

In country research is needed

“An ability for fishermen to speak out and be heard via an independent mechanism to allow them to report and remove themselves from any dangers or dangerous practices.”





Results

The quotes below are taken from the question on how respondents defined Worker Voice, Grievance Mechanisms and worker empowerment as they apply the capture fisheries sector.

- *“Collect, evaluate and remediate Worker Voice complaints.”*
- *“A tool where workers can share their thoughts, questions, needs, problems and complaints and ask for information regarding labour related issues on a voluntary basis.”*
- *“An ability for fishermen to speak out and be heard via an independent mechanism to allow them to report and remove themselves from any dangers or dangerous practices.”*
- *“The terms relate to workers on vessels having a voice in their welfare, working and social conditions on vessels.”*
- *“Suitable systems in place for grievances or whistleblowing to take place without fear or recourse.”*
- *“Grievance mechanism is a channel to make claims anonymously. Worker Voice is the expression of workers on their rights and conditions. Worker empowerment is how workers can come together to express their voice and resolve their grievances.”*
- *“Educating workers on their rights.”*
- *“Raise concerns whilst protecting their confidentiality.”*
- *“Direct and unimpeded line of communication with a trusted and bonded third party responsible for ensuring the health, safety, and welfare of crew working at sea on fishing vessels.”*

Familiarity with Worker Voice increasing in fisheries, but gaps remain

Worker Voice is an emerging term in fisheries, and 93% of respondents in the English survey had some familiarity with the term, although only 68% were familiar with the term as it specifically applies to fisheries.

There were a range of definitions given for Worker Voice, but some of the common themes included:

- Having a voice
- Ability of workers to influence welfare and working conditions on vessels;
- Expression of worker rights

Tools and Channels for achieving Worker Voice in fisheries

There are also a range of channels and tools for achieving Worker Voice in Fisheries. The tools were mapped out covering:

- Industry Social Standards and Audits (due diligence)
- Fishing vessel grievance procedures
- Communications and Technology approaches (including hotlines)
- Empowerment Initiatives

Appropriate tools and channels may depend on the context

The appropriate tools and channels may depend on the context, for examples:

- A lack of connectivity (access to internet) can make hotlines and other communication methods redundant;
- Representation through unions is not feasible in countries that do not allow for trade unions and different representative systems are required.

Lack of government effectiveness in resolving fisher grievances

- Most of the projects have been initiated and developed by Civil Society Organisations and private companies, there is currently a lack of fishing industry specific government led initiatives.
- Authorities are not trusted by fishers to resolve grievances effectively, especially for migrant fishers.
- Regulations protecting fishers and enabling fisher voice are not sufficient.

One size does not fit all

- Vessels that return to the same port every trip or operate in shore will have different grievance procedure needs than vessels that fish in the high seas so it is likely that there will not be a one ideal procedure that fits all types of fishing.
- Further understanding of the fishing operations is required to define what is needed in worst case scenario (vessels at sea for long periods) and benchmark this to scale down (vessels who return to port regularly) where necessary and appropriate for specific operations.
- More understanding is needed about what is happening on fishing vessels when crew have grievances, how they are resolved in practice and what does and does not work from the fisher's perspective.

Guidance also needed on measuring the effectiveness of Worker Voice approaches

- Measuring the success of the grievance procedure is complicated as even though process and procedure may be followed, there will be times where the result is not going to be in the favour of the fisher and this is an acceptable outcome of a grievance procedure.
- It is therefore important that the process is fair and transparent, and that communication of what is happening and why is the critical point. Time and care may be needed to ensure that the process is established and is fair so that the fisher understands the outcome and can make informed decisions based on the understanding of how the process is going and what their options are.

Lack of transparency on vessel Grievance Mechanisms

- There was a lack of published literature or initiatives on-going that specifically explained what a grievance mechanism on fishing vessels looked like. Where fishing company procedures were found it was not possible to publish them due to confidentiality.
- Grievance procedures on vessels are therefore not transparent (unless they are reviewed independently or by a Trade unions) and so understanding their 'fairness' or 'protection of the fisher' is challenging.

Education and awareness for fishers to increase knowledge on available tools and channels

- Education on Worker Voice and the available mechanisms for fishers is essential as fish workers are often far out of reach and away from ongoing conversations regarding their rights and working conditions.
- Awareness is important to that workers understand their rights and what channels and tools are available to them.

Pilot projects tend to be within the EEZ leaving a gap on how to address grievances on the high-seas

- There is more work on Worker Voice in the EEZ zones (for example, in Thailand) but not much happening for the high seas where problems are exacerbated due to the long periods of time spent at sea, higher likelihood of migrant workers and less contact with land.
- Although many pilot programs, and initiatives on Worker Voice and Grievance Mechanisms on fishing vessels were found, not many of these have been able to be scaled-up, whether it be a connectivity at sea project which was only piloted on a few boats such as the Thai Union and Mars Inmarsat project, or an organisation which can only offer the languages they are familiar with, such as the LPN hotlines.



Some Grievance Mechanisms may not provide effective protection to the employee

The worker is not effectively protected where:

- They go direct to the employer without an independent arbitrator;
- The system is not confidential and/or
- There is fear of recourse.

Technological approaches are important if designed with stakeholder-participation and fit within a wider approach

- Some technology-based mechanisms are expensive and restrictive. Connectivity problems include only having one specific spot on the vessel in which connectivity is achievable and as such confidentiality cannot be guaranteed when stood in the 'connected zone'.
- Electronic Monitoring Systems, and in the future these systems may become more feasible. The expense for most mechanisms is due to the demand for real time information and communication.
- New approaches using VMS may have more applicability offshore.
- Case studies illustrate that grievance systems are more successful where they are participatory and involve both vessel owners and workers in their design.
- Technological approaches play an important role when fitting into a wider grievance or Worker Voice approach

Next Steps - building consensus, provide guidance, support change

- Developing **consensus** on definitions and terms associated with Worker Voice and Grievance Mechanisms in fisheries;
- Understanding the **difference** and interaction between Worker Voice and Grievance mechanisms
- Agreeing a **set of principles** for best-practice approaches to Worker Voice and Grievance Mechanisms;
- Reaching consensus on **the objectives and beneficiaries** of Worker Voice and grievance initiatives;
- Developing detailed **guidelines** (or best-practice examples) on applying principles through a range of actors and channels, tailored to a range of vessel types and contexts;
 - **Listening** to fishers and captains from a variety of fisheries is necessary to understand how grievances are dealt with on-board and what would help them in resolving them in a way that improves the situation for all parties . This would be a helpful starting point for determining what would be best practice and for which types of fisheries.
- Designing indicators for measuring the **effectiveness** of Worker Voice and Grievance Mechanisms for fishers;
- Determining minimum standards for workers' access to information to enable voice, to be informed of what to say when using such mechanisms.

Project Two: Building Consensus

Outcomes for assurance providers, buyers, regulators, NGOs, fisheries organisations, vessel owners and more

Multilingual inquiry process

Current BP/expectation

Training/models

Road to better

- <https://blog.seafoodassurances.org/global-seafood-assurance-gsa-today-release-their-white-paper-worker-voice-on-fishing-vessels/>

melanie@seafoodassurances.org

mike@seafoodassurances.org

i.pollard@keytraceability.com

l.hayman@keytraceability.com

