

FISHERFOLKFIRST, NGO

Governing Document



Written by

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This Governing Document was prepared in compliance with the requirements for non-profit organisations under the Turks and Caicos Islands Non-Profit Organisation Regulations 2014.

1. Name

The NGO is called “*FisherFolkFirst*”, abbreviated to “*F3*”. The philosophy of the NGO is to put the interests of fishers, fish workers, and the broader small-scale fishing community at the forefront of activities and initiatives within a framework of sustainability. The name is designed to emphasise this philosophy.

2. Establishment

FisherFolkFirst was established on 4th April 2018, and registered as a non profit organisation in Providenciales, Turks and Caicos Islands on 13th April 2018. Registered No. 196/2018. A renewed registration form was issued on 2nd March 2022 with no expiration date.

3. Tagline

“Building empowered coastal communities with healthy seas and bright futures”.

4. Logo and branding



5. Problem statement

Approximately 90% of fishers work in small-scale fisheries, and an additional 100 million people are employed in associated activities (e.g. processing, transporting, marketing; data from FAO). In many cases, these fisherfolk are trapped in a cycle of poverty, their fisheries are overexploited, and their coastal habitats are degraded. Fisherfolk often work in unsafe and illegal conditions for low pay, with little access to the market chain, and they have limited opportunities to diversify their livelihoods. Furthermore, fisherfolk are removed from the process of governance, and social issues such as substance abuse jeopardise fisherfolk’s prospects and those of their families.

6. Purpose of FisherFolkFirst

Vision

Environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable small-scale fisheries where fisherfolk are empowered, coastal and marine environments are healthy, and where fisherfolk have secure prosperous futures.

Mission

To work with fisherfolk to establish firm foundations for sustainable small-scale fisheries through outreach and education, implementation, and research.

Values

Justice – Respect – Inclusion – Transparency

7. Objectives

1. Work towards improved 'blue justice' (including safety) for fisherfolk;
2. Enhance stewardship among fisherfolk for their natural resources, and marine and coastal habitats;
3. Improve Ocean Literacy among fisherfolk;
4. Provide fisherfolk access to supply chain;
5. Provide voice/advocacy for fisherfolk;
6. Provide pertinent socio-ecological research;
7. Pursue value-added initiatives (e.g. storied seafood, brands ensuring social equity and commitment to sustainability, seafood traceability);
8. Explore complementary sustainable livelihood opportunities for fishers and fish workers;
9. Build healthy coastal and marine environments;
10. Build resilience to climate change within fishing industry;
11. Connect communities with their fishing heritage;
12. Work with local governments to improve and advance legislation for fisheries governance and management.
13. Provide training for fisherfolk;

8. Activities/Projects

FisherFolkFirst shall be responsive to the changing needs of fishing communities and will engage in activities and projects that fall within the general mission of the organisation. Prioritisation of activities will be determined by need, and whether funds were raised specifically for a certain activity.

9. Fundraising

Fundraising will be conducted through:

1. Holding fundraising events;
2. Submission of grant proposals;
3. Soliciting donations, both online (e.g. crowd-funding) and in-person.

In 2024, *FisherFolkFirst* started using the TrustBridge Global international donation platform.

10. How FisherFolkFirst works

FisherFolkFirst will work with fisherfolk, other NGOs, government, researchers from academic institutions, and consultants. *FisherFolkFirst* will work on its own funded projects as well as collaborating on projects where an alternative entity is the lead organisation.

11. Where Fisherfolk First works

Initially, *FisherFolkFirst* will focus activities in the Turks and Caicos Islands. However, if the organisation grows, then it may expand to pursue its mission internationally.

12. Organisational Structure

12.1. Personnel

12.1.1. FisherFolkFirst Board

FisherFolkFirst is overseen by a board of at least three directors, serving the function of ‘controllers’ *in sensu* Turks and Caicos Islands Non-Profit Organisation Regulations 2014.

The roles of Chairperson, Secretary, and Treasurer will be shared between directors.

While *FisherFolkFirst* wishes to engage as many pertinent stakeholders in their activities, there is no membership *per se*.

Board members shall not be paid for executing their roles as board members (i.e., as ‘controllers’), but shall be reimbursed for expenses, and may expect reasonable compensation for other services rendered in furtherance of the *FisherFolkFirst’s* objectives, unless agreed to be performed on a voluntary basis.

12.1.2. FisherFolkFirst Staff

Recruitment of staff may be necessary to meet the growing needs of *FisherFolkFirst*. New staff positions shall be approved in writing by the board. Unless the position is agreed to be performed on a voluntary basis, all staff shall be compensated at a reasonable scale commensurate with the role being undertaken. Employment of staff shall follow all pertinent local laws.

12.2. Duties

Board members are required to follow good governance and the rules outlined in this governing document. Board members shall try to make themselves available for all board meetings.

There are no membership fees owing.

12.3. Eligibility

All board members must be 18 years old or older and must have no conflicts of interest. There are no restrictions to eligibility to become a board member.

12.4. Term limits, Suspension, Expulsion

There are no term limits. The board can make a decision to suspend or expel a board member for violations of the governing document. Any violation of the law shall result in expulsion and immediately reporting this violation to the appropriate authorities. Any decision to suspend or expel a board member must be made at a board meeting.

12.5. Elections

In the event of a board member stepping down or being expelled, the board shall elect a new member, with each remaining board member having a vote. In the event of a tie, the Executive Director will have the deciding vote. Elections will also be held should there be a decision to add more board members.

12.3. Changes in Organisational Structure, Governing Document etc.

Changes to the organisational structure, governing document, by-laws, etc, must be proposed and approved in a board meeting. Such changes can be made if it becomes a legal requirement, or if it is believed to be advantageous for the smooth running of the NGO. Changes can be made only if they are legally compliant with the legislation under which the NGO is registered.

13. Decision-making

13.1. Approval of Projects

Projects must be proposed in writing by one or more directors. A director may propose a project on behalf of an outside party. In order to progress, projects must be approved by a majority of at least 2 out of three directors.

13.2. Purchasing

Funds held by *FisherFolkFirst* can only be used for valid *FisherFolkFirst* expenses: i.e. those that are required for the running of the organisation, the implementation of projects, the solicitation of donations, and publicity. For expenses less than \$5000 (USD) the Executive Director may make purchases without consulting other Directors. Other Directors may make purchases under \$5000 (USD) on behalf of *FisherFolkFirst* with the written approval from the Executive Director. Expenses greater than \$5000 (USD) can be made by any Director, but require written approval from all signatories on the account. Purchases can only be made if sufficient funds are available (i.e. there is enough money in the account, and these funds have not been designated to other expenses or projects). Effort must be made to minimise expenses and to seek good value for money. Records of all purchases must be kept and archived.

FisherFolkFirst's income and property are not distributable to its members or office-bearers, except as reasonable compensation for services rendered in furtherance of the organisation's objectives.

13.3. Redirection of funds

If funds have been donated specifically for a project, item, or other expense, approval must be given by the donor in writing before these funds can be directed elsewhere.

Where an expense has been approved, but no transaction has been made, it may be proposed in writing to redirect these funds elsewhere. This redirection of funds requires written approval by the Executive Director and at least one other Director.

14. Board Meetings

14.1. Quorum

In order for a meeting to begin officially and for official decisions to be taken, there must be at least two thirds of the board present.

14.2. Scheduling

There shall be a minimum of one annual board meeting, while striving to hold quarterly meetings once F3 has a level of activities requiring greater coordination of the board (Q1: 1st April to 30th June, Q2: 1st July to 30th September, Q3: 1st October to 31st December, Q4: 1st January to 31st March).

14.3. Format

Meetings can be conducted in person, over the telephone, 'Skype', 'Zoom', using some other electronic method with real-time voice interaction, or combination of the above.

14.4. Minutes

One of the Directors will act as secretary and take minutes. Minutes will be circulated for approval not more than 2 weeks following a meeting. Once minutes are approved by all attendees, they will be archived.

14.5. Agenda

The secretary will prepare an agenda. All members can submit items to be included in the agenda up to a week prior to the scheduled meeting.

An agenda will include (but is not limited to) the following items:

- Review of progress on action points
- Review of active projects
- Review of finances (incomes and expenditures presented by the *Treasurer*)
- Any other business

15. Communication

Except for board meetings where communication will be verbal and recorded in minutes, all formal communication between board members will be through email and archived.

16. Finances

16.1. Bank Account

FisherFolkFirst finances are to be managed in a single bank account. The Executive Director and at least one of the other Directors are to be named signatories on the bank account. One of the board shall be nominated as *Treasurer*. All transactions shall be conducted via regulated financial channels.

16.2. Fundraising

Fundraising can be generic in nature or specific to a certain project. *FisherFolkFirst* will not accept funds from any illegal sources. *FisherFolkFirst* will not hold funds on behalf of other entities.

16.3. Purchasing

See purchasing protocol above under “Decision-making”.

16.4. Reimbursement

All expenses incurred by board members for approved *FisherFolkFirst* activities can be reimbursed upon submission of receipts to the Executive Director. Approved expenses by non-board members may also be reimbursed in the same way. Reimbursement may take the form of cheque, bank transfer, or cash.

FisherFolkFirst's income and property are not distributable to its members or office-bearers, except as reasonable compensation for services rendered in furtherance of the organisation's objectives.

17. Record-keeping

All official documents and records will be archived digitally and backed up on a hard-drive and through a cloud-based system. Access to documents of public record will be made available through the website (once developed) and upon request.

All data collected through research projects will be archived in a similar fashion, but public access may be restricted depending on the sensitivity of the data in question.

Yearly financial records will be prepared by the *Treasurer* and submitted to the Turks and Caicos Islands Financial Services Commission, and any and all agencies that require such submissions due to the jurisdictions under which *FisherFolkFirst* operates and under which it is registered as an NGO (should this change in the future from the Turks and Caicos Islands).

18. Dissolution of FisherFolkFirst

FisherFolkFirst may be dissolved upon a unanimous decision by the board of directors, or if 2 or more directors resign and no replacements can be found within 6 months.

Upon dissolution of *FisherFolkFirst*, all funds and assets will be transferred to the *designated beneficiary NGO* or multiple *designated beneficiary NGOs*.

The *designated beneficiary NGO* is currently *South Caicos Hope*, an NGO registered in the Turks and Caicos Islands. The *designated beneficiary NGO* can be changed upon unanimous vote by the board. If multiple NGOs are designated it shall be recorded how funds and assets are to be divided.

19. Conflict of Interest Provisions

All board members and staff must avoid any conflict between their personal interests and those of *FisherFolkFirst*.

20. Contact Address

Currently, there is no physical *FisherFolkFirst* office. *FisherFolkFirst* will endeavour to secure a PO Box once one becomes available in the Turks and Caicos Islands. In the meantime, the contact address for notices from the TCI FSC etc. is:

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