



Photo credit: WorldFish

Illuminating Hidden Harvests

The contribution of small-scale fisheries to sustainable development

From roadside drainage channels in Southeast Asia, to mega-deltas of the world's large river systems and the nearshore waters of oceans and seas, small-scale fisheries provide livelihoods for millions, essential nutrition to billions and contribute substantially to household, local and national economies and economic growth. In the oceans, more people work in small-scale fisheries than in all other sectors combined.^{1,2} Inland rivers, lakes and floodplains support even more men and women fishers, processors and sellers than do marine systems,¹ often as one component of a complex and seasonally variable livelihood. Furthermore, small-scale fisheries are often culturally important to the identity of those involved, and can be central to trade, social structures and interactions within and among communities.

Yet due to the highly diverse and dispersed nature of small-scale fisheries, quantifying and understanding their multiple contributions is difficult, and a unified and effective voice for advocacy can seem unattainable. As a result, despite impressive headline statistics, small-scale fisheries are too frequently marginalized in political processes and not given due attention in

policy. This is becoming increasingly problematic as pressure from outside the sector (e.g. globalized trade, competition for space and resources, climate change) and from within (e.g. rising fishing effort, limited investment in management) increases and the costs of marginalization are ever more apparent.

The Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication³ (hereafter 'SSF Guidelines') represent a global, highly participatory multistakeholder effort to redress this issue. The SSF Guidelines have the ambitious goal of supporting the development of small-scale fisheries and fishing communities through a human rights-based approach to fisheries that is socially and environmentally sustainable. Achieving this goal will require substantial support from governments, private enterprise, international donors and NGOs. A key element in building the case for this support is better illuminating the diverse contributions of these fisheries, and providing new evidence in a way that can be used by communities and advocates to make a strong case for investment in the sector.

¹ World Bank, FAO, WorldFish. 2012. *Hidden Harvest: The Global Contribution of Capture Fisheries*. World Bank, New York.

² OECD. 2016. *The Ocean Economy in 2030*. OECD Publishing, Paris.

³ Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication. 2015. FAO, Rome., <http://www.fao.org/3/i4356en/i4356EN.pdf>



Women selling smoked fish and shrimp at Sekondi market, Ghana.

What are the hidden harvests of small-scale fisheries?

In 2012, FAO, the World Bank and WorldFish published *Hidden Harvest: The Global Contribution of Capture Fisheries*. This was a first attempt to synthesize information on the diverse and misreported livelihood and economic contributions of capture fisheries globally. The project produced detailed case studies from countries with important inland and marine small-scale fisheries, and used these to estimate global contributions. This synthesis produced some valuable new estimates of relative importance of large-scale and small-scale fisheries. At the headline level, millions of metric tons of fish from the sector are *hidden* (unreported), with the synthesis suggesting underreporting rates from inland fisheries globally of

about 70 percent. Small-scale fisheries in developing countries produce almost as much fish for direct domestic consumption as large-scale fisheries, and most of this is consumed locally in rural settings where poverty rates are high and quality nutrition is sorely needed. Importantly, the study highlighted that almost 50 percent of workers in the sector are women.

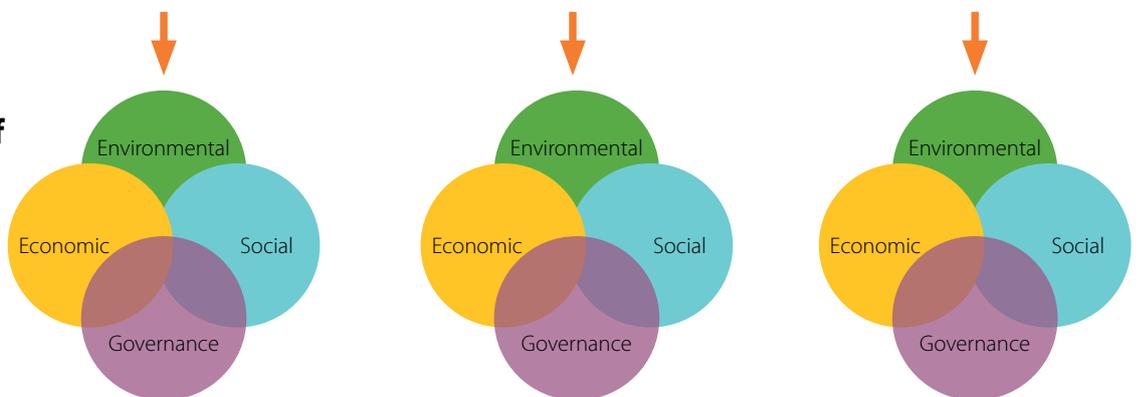
Shedding new light on hidden harvests

To support the growing momentum in implementing the SSF Guidelines, and in response to the Sustainable Development Goals, FAO, WorldFish and Duke University are working in partnership with experts globally to revisit and build on this initial *Hidden Harvest* study. Encompassing the pre-harvesting, harvesting and post-harvesting sectors of inland and

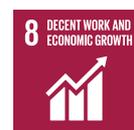
Organizational framework

SSF level of analysis Pre-harvesting ↔ Harvesting ↔ Post-harvesting

Dimensions of contributions



SDGs



marine fisheries, the new study asks the questions:

- What are the social, environmental, economic and governance contributions of small-scale fisheries at global and local scales?
- What are the key drivers of change in these sectors, including both threats and opportunities?

As with the first *Hidden Harvest* study, we will use a case study approach to engage with local expertise in priority countries that have substantial small-scale fisheries sectors or notable nutritional dependence on small-scale fisheries. The study will also take advantage of improved availability of relevant national and global datasets on fisheries, demographics, employment, fish consumption and nutrition in the synthesis and extrapolation process. Besides updating many indicators from the first study, the new study seeks in particular to provide new synthesis on social and nutritional benefits, and social differentiation in the flow of benefits from different fishery sectors. A series of thematic studies will highlight available information

on important themes that may include among others climate change impacts, contributions to conservation and governance, where global synthesis is perhaps not yet possible. The team will engage diverse expertise across the research sector to improve the depth of analysis, and the validity and precision of new estimates, as well as customizing reporting and information presentation for diverse end-user groups.

Key audiences and engagement

National governments and fisheries institutions

With primary responsibility for policy and often a central actor in management, government institutions are an important client and collaborator in the project. For case study countries, the project can offer expert synthesis of existing survey and research data that can provide new policy-relevant understandings of the diverse contributions of the national inland and marine small-scale fisheries sectors.



Photo credit: Babarun Mahabadi/WorlFish

Landless fishers in Bangladesh live and work on their boats.

The project seeks assistance from fisheries administrations in completing an FAO ad-hoc survey on small-scale fisheries that will feed into both national case studies and global synthesis. This survey will ask specific questions about the small-scale fisheries sector and availability of data. It also complements the survey conducted in support of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

Civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, communities and fishers

Fishing communities, CSOs and NGOs (national and international) are important voices in advocating a productive, equitable and sustainable future for small-scale fisheries and the implementation of the SSF Guidelines. The project will work directly with these groups to understand information needs, and the best approaches to presenting outcomes of the study in a useable way.

The project seeks assistance from these groups in case study countries with locating the best available information and data on all aspects of small-scale fisheries, with a particular focus on livelihoods, social and governance aspects.

Science and development communities

As both advocates and research partners in the sector, local contextual and high-level synthesized data and information on the contributions of small-scale fisheries are important in setting the priorities, direction and design of research. The project will work with local and international scientists and practitioners in case study countries to help identify existing data and studies most relevant to the small-scale fisheries sector. The

core team will work with aligned experts on thematic studies that integrate with the purposes of the project.

Project outputs and reporting

The project will produce a major synthesis report in 2020. Thematic studies and possibly some country case studies will be published as separate reports and scientific journal articles where appropriate. A major communications effort will accompany the project, involving close engagement with key stakeholders to understand communication needs to support small-scale fishery communities and the drive to implement the SSF Guidelines.

The project provides a 'snapshot' of the current contributions from small-scale fisheries but importantly also looks at drivers of change. Associated with the project, but extending beyond the 2020 reporting date, will be an initiative that integrates methods and outcomes from country case studies, thematic studies and global synthesis into a framework for monitoring change trajectories and impacts of investments and management innovation in the small-scale fisheries sector.

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<https://www.worldfishcenter.org/hidden-harvests>