



Food and Agriculture
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Illuminating Hidden Harvests

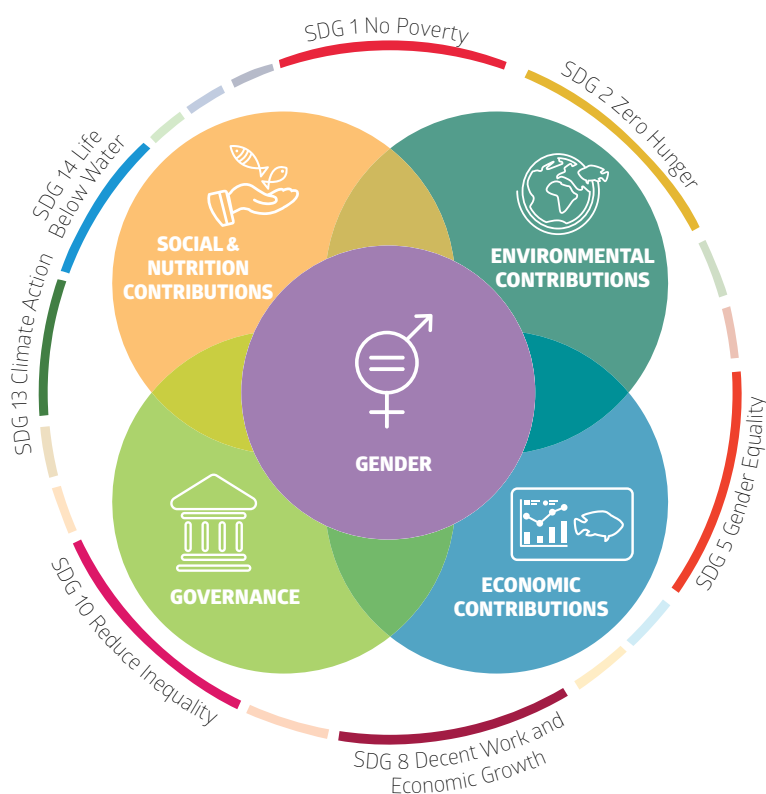
The contribution of
small-scale fisheries to
sustainable development

Better data on and understanding of small-scale fisheries is needed to enable effective, inclusive and participatory governance and sustainable development of the sector in line with the *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication* (SSF Guidelines). In June 2017, FAO in collaboration with WorldFish and Duke University initiated a global study titled 'Illuminating Hidden Harvests: The contribution of small-scale fisheries to sustainable development' (IHH). The release of the study is planned for 2021.

This brief provides an update on the status of the study and shares emerging insights on the need for better data collection and analysis, and additional monitoring capacity to improve our collective understanding of small-scale fisheries. This is critical to increasing government attention and improving policy responses and outcomes for the sector.

About the study

To support the implementation of the [SSF Guidelines](#) and achievement of multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the IHH study aims to **provide evidence** of key social, nutritional, environmental, economic and governance contributions of small-scale fisheries at global and local scales.



The IHH study will provide a revised and expanded version of the 2012 World Bank/FAO/WorldFish publication [Hidden Harvest: The global contribution of capture fisheries](#). It will provide updated and more thorough information on variables such as catch and employment, as well as present information on the current and potential nutritional contribution of inland and marine small-scale fisheries.

A tapestry of approaches

The IHH study uses a case study approach to engage with expertise about priority countries that have substantial small-scale fisheries sectors or notable nutritional or livelihood dependence on small-scale fisheries. The results of the case studies, along with data from a questionnaire answered by national fisheries administrations and relevant national and global datasets, will be used to project regional and global estimates of key variables.

In addition, a series of thematic studies will cover key topics for which global syntheses are not yet possible or may not be appropriate, or are more qualitative in nature. For example, one thematic study will focus on the role of small-scale fisheries in providing key nutrients to vulnerable populations, with a focus on women and young children. Other thematic studies address gender, indigenous peoples, the carbon footprint of small-scale fisheries, and aspects related to conservation and governance.

58 country and territory case studies

compiling information from a multitude of sources



Thematic studies on key topics



Illuminating Hidden Harvests



Global, regional and national data sets

including fisheries, demographics, employment, fish consumption and nutrition



Questionnaires

answered by national fisheries administrations in 104 countries

Informing and empowering

The data and knowledge generated by the study is expected to **contribute to more effective decision-making** by policymakers and **empower small-scale fishing actors and their communities** and stakeholders to call for greater support and investment by their governments and partners.



A **communications effort** is accompanying the IHH study, involving close engagement with key stakeholders to ensure that the key findings and information are available to those who need them the most. Critically, the IHH results will link with and feed into high-level events, including the UN Decade of Family Farming (2019-2028), the Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030), and the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (2022).

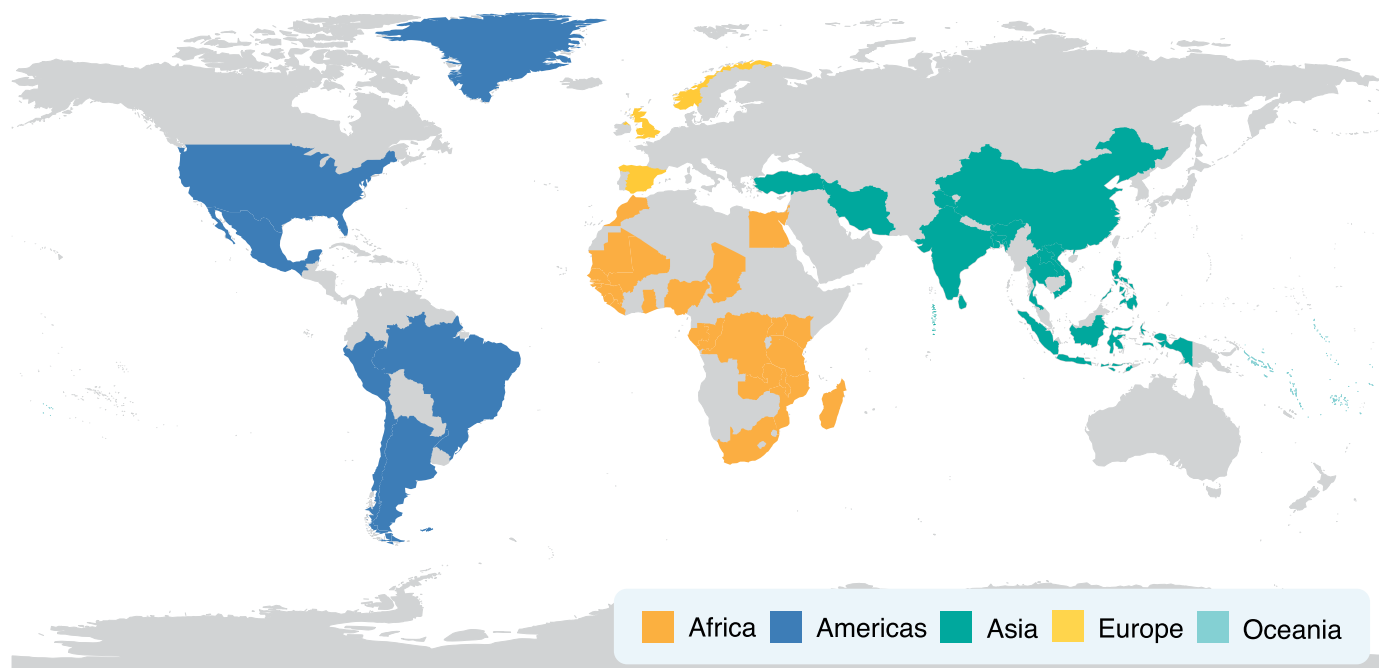
Achievements so far

- A **methodology was developed** and used to collect and collate small-scale fisheries data from different existing data sources at national and international levels.
- **Fifty-eight country and territory case studies** have been concluded.
- Over **300 people**, including researchers, government staff, and consultants, have been engaged in identifying and validating existing data and studies relevant to the small-scale fisheries sector in the case study countries.
- **28 gender experts** from around the world were identified for the case study countries, and surveys helped identify gendered data gaps, causes, gendered impacts along the SSF value chain, and potential solutions.
- A **questionnaire** on small-scale fisheries data was sent to **228 countries and territories**, which had an 48 percent response rate.
- Global experts have produced **a series of thematic studies**.



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Country and territory case studies



Map conforms to United Nations Map No. 4170 Rev. 19, October 2020

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this/these map(s) do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of FAO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers and boundaries. Dashed lines on maps represent approximate border lines for which there may not yet be full agreement.

The way forward: Turning challenges into opportunities

The entire data collection and collation process so far, including both the country case studies and the questionnaire, has revealed **an incredible variability in data collection** on small-scale fisheries by governments. In many cases, there is a clear lack of information available to policymakers about these fisheries because data on small-scale fisheries is not collected at all or is not distinguished from large-scale fisheries data. In other cases, data on small-scale fisheries may be collected but the capacity to analyze and interpret it is lacking, or not prioritized.

Going beyond fisheries: Promoting new forms of interaction to advance knowledge and discoveries relevant to fisheries management and governance

As noted in the SSF Guidelines, small-scale fisheries are complex socio-ecological systems requiring holistic management approaches. The IHH study acknowledges the complexity of the sector and takes a **multidisciplinary approach**. The IHH methodology in many cases required country case study authors and researchers, who generally had a fisheries background, to look beyond the sector to explore information in relation to food security and nutrition and gender. To facilitate this, **gender experts** and food security experts were connected with the country case study teams.

The methodology also invited the IHH researchers to explore **non-conventional, non-fisheries specific data sources** such as Labor Force Surveys or Household Income and Expenditure Surveys through a small-scale fisheries lens. Thus, the study created an important network of national small-scale fisheries experts—including from research, government, and others—who were exposed to other areas of knowledge outside the conventional area of fisheries management, which motivated them to take a broader perspective of the sector.

The IHH study provides the entry point to develop a **global small-scale fisheries database** that can support the better connection of different areas of knowledge and data sets, and the people working on those. Together with the methodologies developed and the data collected, these new connections can be used to improve small-scale fisheries data collection at the national level.

The need and desire for more training on small-scale fisheries data collection and analysis

While the immediate purpose of the IHH study is to provide a snapshot of the contributions of small-scale fisheries to sustainable development, the products of the study can be **built on for the future**. FAO, Duke University, WorldFish, and partners propose to further develop the capacities of small-scale fisheries stakeholders at regional and country levels, and further connect experts of different relevant disciplines. Harmonized data collection and improved interdisciplinary capacities are critical for sustainable small-scale fisheries policy.

The IHH approach, methodologies, and data sources will be made available for governments, researchers, and others to apply and refine. This can support the continuous updating of key indicators and will help track progress towards securing sustainable small-scale fisheries and achieving the SDGs.

The IHH study is hence positioned to **trigger transformational changes** for how data on small-scale fisheries is collected, analyzed, and disseminated. This could start to change the way fisheries and related livelihoods are monitored and addressed by reflecting the unique circumstances in which small-scale fisheries operate across different contexts, and by helping to ensure that they are appropriately accounted for by policymakers. This will align small-scale fisheries data collection with the SSF Guidelines and SDGs, better connecting sustainable fisheries to food security and nutrition, biodiversity, poverty eradication, and gender equality.

About the study

Illuminating Hidden Harvests is a collaborative study to assess the contributions, impacts and drivers of small-scale fisheries globally to inform policy-making processes and empower fishing communities with key information. Led by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Duke University and WorldFish, the study due out in 2021 will support implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries and progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals. Funding for the study is provided by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Oak Foundation and CGIAR Trust Fund.

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

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