

SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES COME INTO FOCUS

By the Illuminating Hidden Harvests team

Findings from the forthcoming Illuminating Hidden Harvests (IHH)¹ report show that small-scale fisheries produce 37 million tonnes of global catch and employ 90% of those working along the value chain in capture fisheries globally. These findings and others will add to the growing body of evidence around small-scale fisheries and support fisherfolk in achieving a ‘seat at the table’ in national, regional and global policy processes.



Photo credit: Wade Fairley / WorldFish <https://flic.kr/p/rb7MSc>

“Fishing is as old as humanity. Fish trade is one of the oldest forms of social exchange,” said Toddi Steelman, Stanback Dean of the Nicholas School of the Environment at Duke University. “Yet, their continued invisibility has had important environmental justice and gender inequity implications,” Steelman noted at the Illuminating Hidden Harvests (IHH) key findings webinar on 23 November 2021, which presented some results from the IHH report.

The IHH report is part of a broader initiative led by FAO, Duke University, and WorldFish launched in June 2017 that helps shine a much needed light on small-scale fisheries globally. Due out this year (2022), the report draws on a tapestry of methods, including 58 country and territory case studies, to examine the current environmental, social, economic and governance contributions of marine and inland small-scale fisheries at global and local scales.



Tapestry of approaches used in the IHH report

¹ <https://www.fao.org/voluntary-guidelines-small-scale-fisheries/ihh/en/>

Its rationale is that 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)².

Thanks to the contribution of more than 800 experts, new and clearer insights are coming to the surface, adding to the growing body of evidence around small-scale fisheries. This article presents a summary of the key findings from the forthcoming IHH report.

A first look at key findings

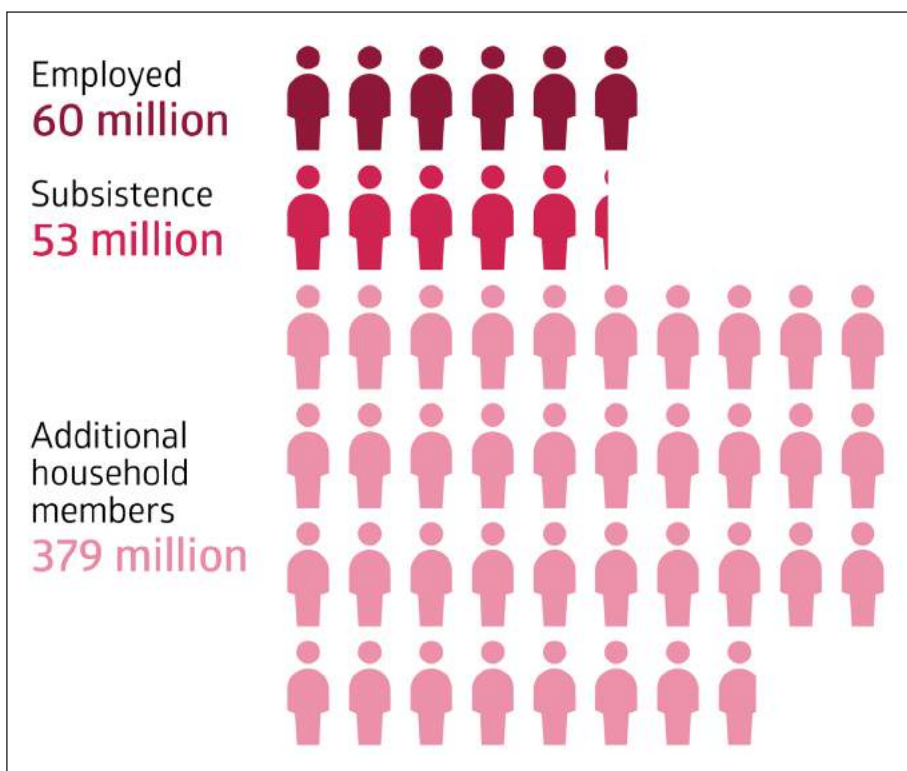
Small-scale fisheries account for 37 million tonnes (40%) of global catch from marine and inland capture fisheries, which is estimated to be 92 million tonnes. The IHH data finds that 68% comes from marine small-scale fisheries, and 32% comes from inland small-scale fisheries.

Small-scale fisheries catch equates to an average annual total revenue of US\$77 billion, based on total revenues from the first sale of the catch. Of this, USD 58 billion and USD 19 billion comes from marine small-scale fisheries and inland small-scale fisheries respectively.

When looking at the economic contributions of small-scale fisheries, the IHH data further finds that 60 million people are directly employed along small-scale fisheries value chains, either part or full time. This represents 90% of all of those employed in capture fisheries along the value chain globally.

An additional 53 million people were engaged in subsistence fishing at least once during 2016. These combined 113 million people have an estimated total additional 379 million household members to support. Therefore, collectively, 492 million people are at least partially dependent on small-scale fisheries. This is equivalent to almost 7% of the world's population in 2016.

Gender is central to small-scale fisheries and sustainable development, and small-scale fisheries cannot be understood without considering gender. The report finds that at least



Representation of people at least partially dependent on small-scale fisheries.
One person = 10 million people

45 million women participate in small-scale fisheries value chains worldwide, representing 40% of all estimated small-scale fisheries labour. Women are most engaged in post-harvest, where they account for roughly 50% of the labour in the processing, transporting, trading, and selling of small-scale fisheries catch.

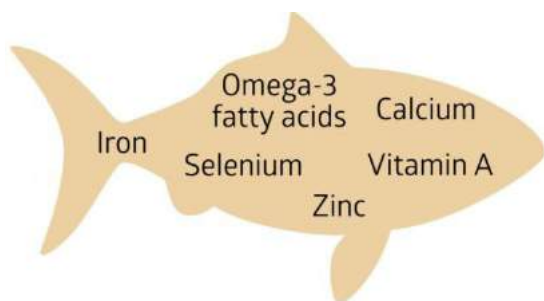
The IHH gender analysis also highlighted several patterns. For example, while women participate in small-scale fisheries in substantial numbers, they are under-represented in governance arenas and face significant barriers to meaningful participation in management and decision-making. Additionally, in many contexts, women, and especially certain groups of women, have less access to small-scale fisheries but stand to disproportionately benefit from them, especially their income and nutrition-related benefits.

The IHH nutrition team was able to identify the recommended nutrient intake (RNI) of some fish for the first time using predictive modelling. This technique revealed that while all fish provide diverse macro- and micronutrients, nutrient values vary substantially among fish types, with small fish being especially nutritious.

Small-scale fisheries catch can play an important role in addressing known nutrition deficiencies, even at the scale

² <https://www.fao.org/voluntary-guidelines-small-scale-fisheries/en/>

of national populations. For instance, the total nutrient yield from small-scale fisheries landings could provide 20% of the RNI for the four most abundant nutrients—calcium, selenium, zinc and omega-3 fatty acids, to 137 million women in Africa and 271 million women in Asia.



Fish provide a good diversity of macro- and micro- nutrients

Finally, to better understand the extent to which co-management has been implemented globally, IHH researchers analysed fisheries policies and the amount of catch governed by those policies for 55% of global small-scale fisheries catch. Results show that at the national level, of every 10 tonnes of small-scale fisheries catch, there are formal co-management provisions for 4 tonnes, but only 2 tonnes are likely co-managed with high participation by fishers, according to IHH country and territory case study experts. These results are mirrored at the subnational level, although the proportion of co-managed catch increases at the local level.

The IHH researchers conducted a global survey of 424 small-scale fisheries producer organisations. Responses showed that 99% of producer organisations have goals related to harvesting and sustainable fisheries management, and 60% have goals related to well-being, including labour rights, food security, or human and environmental health.

Fishers and fishworkers see themselves as active contributors to the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication, and not passive recipients of State action.

Improving methods and capacities

The IHH report is an important step to further improve methods and capacities to collect, analyse and use data and information on small-scale fisheries, as a basis for sound and inclusive policy-making and resource governance.

The interdisciplinary approach undertaken by IHH attempts to transcend individual disciplines to integrate different policy domains and sources of information. This methodology, said Manuel Barange, FAO Director of Fisheries and Aquaculture, who spoke at the key findings webinar, will “bring new understandings of the importance of small-scale fisheries.”

Gareth Johnstone, Director General at WorldFish, who also spoke during the key findings webinar, added the need to leverage the robust data and evidence generated from the IHH initiative to advocate for better recognition of small-scale fisheries as crucial to global food systems. This, he underscored, will lead “to healthier and sustainable diets with important small-scale fisheries perspectives on food, nutrition, equity and social justice, and environmental sustainability.”

A communications effort accompanied the IHH study, involving close engagement with key stakeholders to ensure that the key findings and information will be 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 (IYAFA 2022). The latter is being commemorated this year and is an opportunity to highlight the importance of small-scale artisanal fisheries and aquaculture for our food systems, livelihoods, culture and the environment.

The objectives of IYAFA 2022 are:

- Enhance global awareness about, understanding of and action to support the contribution of small-scale artisanal fisheries and aquaculture to sustainable development, and more specifically in relation to food security and nutrition, poverty eradication and the use of natural resources.
- Promote dialogue and collaboration between and among small-scale artisanal fishers, fish farmers, fish workers, governments and other key partners along the value chain, in order to further strengthen their capacity to enhance sustainability in fisheries and aquaculture and to enhance their social development and well-being. Visit the IHH webpage: <https://www.fao.org/voluntary-guidelines-small-scale-fisheries/ihh.en/> to watch the webinar recording or learn more about IHH. Stay tuned for the full report launch in 2022.

The Illuminating Hidden Harvests team comprises resource persons from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Duke University (USA) and WorldFish.