



COASTAL500

Local Action Towards Thriving Coastal Communities

A Guidebook for Leaders



With updated recommendations from the
2023 Illuminating Hidden Harvests Report.

Members of the Coastal 500 have committed themselves to key principles for supporting healthy and sustainable fisheries. Each member of the Coastal 500 takes an identical public pledge to build thriving and prosperous coastal communities.

The Coastal 500 Action Guidebook outlines specific actions that can be taken to bring this pledge to life.

This updated edition reflects new insights and recommendations from a comprehensive report entitled *Illuminating Hidden Harvests: The Contributions of Small-Scale Fisheries to Sustainable Development* (hereinafter referred to as IHH). The IHH report has been produced jointly by FAO, Duke University and WorldFish, with contributions covering 58 countries and territories, and involving about 800 individual researchers, government officials and consultants. The report highlights key information on the role of small-scale fisheries in the areas of food security and nutrition, sustainable livelihoods, poverty eradication and healthy ecosystems.



COASTAL500

Connecting Leaders for Thriving Coastal Communities

Key Highlights of the IHH Report

The full report can be accessed [here](#).

Small-scale fisheries (SSF) play a vital role in the livelihoods and food security of millions of people worldwide. But their full impact is not fully captured by current data. Results from the IHH help shine a light on some important aspects of the sector, with important implications for policy and local leaders.

Small-scale fisheries = food and jobs for millions

Globally, 491.7 million people depend on small-scale fisheries either for employment or subsistence, 39.6% of whom are women.

Role in local economies

Small-scale fisheries provide over 20 percent of employment in 12 administrative areas across six countries. Despite their significant contributions, small-scale fisheries' economic impact is often overlooked or concealed in national fisheries statistics due to the informality and seasonality of their activities.

Gender disparities in SSF

Women play important roles across the fisheries value chain, from gear fabrication to fish trading, especially in post-harvest activities like processing and selling. They are engaged in diverse methods, from boat-based to foot fisheries. Women-dominated methods include foraging by hand, hand nets, or beach seines, often in nearshore habitats like estuaries and mangroves.

But most data and policy priorities focus on traditional boat-based and full-time fishing activities, rendering women invisible, and gender-blind policies and regulations often exclude women's activities, reinforcing traditional roles and suppressing their voices in governance and decision-making. In addition, men are more likely to access the nutritional benefits of fish.

Other factors like age, class and ethnicity also affect access to fisheries and its benefits.

Data gaps in marine small-scale fisheries

Insufficient and fragmented data collection processes do not capture the extent and intricacies of marine small-scale fisheries. The IHH analyses suggest a considerable underestimation in these fisheries' contributions to the GDP, potentially ranging between 30 percent to as much as 100 percent.

Shared governance of SSF

Approximately 40% of global SSF comes from fisheries that employ co-management, but even fewer involve substantial fisher participation. Local management, national policy and the different aspects of various small-scale fisheries are not always aligned.

Small-scale fisheries can be described in many ways

SSF varies greatly by location, making universal definitions challenging. Emphasizing local and regional identification and definitions, using participatory processes, can lead to a more accurate understanding of SSF. Developing better tools to differentiate between small- and large-scale fisheries is essential for the creation of more focused and relevant policies.

What Local Leaders Can Do:

1. Promote local community-led initiatives and participatory governance

Set up a framework for regular consultation and collaboration with regional experts and fishing communities to ensure that policy decisions are relevant and address the unique needs of a region. Emphasizing fishers' tenure rights, principles of fairness, and equity can empower them and lead to more sustainable practices. Consideration for Indigenous fishing rights and practices, along with recognition of the unique social and cultural identities of small-scale fishers, are also crucial elements in effective governance.

2. Implement gender-sensitive policies

Ensure that women's roles in fisheries, especially in support roles, are captured in data collection initiatives, and mandate equal pay for equal work in the fishing sector, as well as equal access to credit and other resources. Enable greater voice and participation for women in decision-making and governance by advancing gender sensitivity among local officials and community leaders.

3. Implement good data collection systems, and empower through data

Develop a strategy to systematize data collection for small-scale fisheries. Pay attention to information related to subsistence activities, and create dedicated teams responsible for collecting information regularly. Work with national and regional agencies towards standardized methods if possible. Make the data about SSF is available and accessible to all, and encourage the use of digital tools and applications for fishers to report their catches, share experiences, and even market their produce.

4. Gain a better understanding of economic impact of SSF

Enhance data collection to include metrics such as the landed economic value of catch, and work with researchers to understand the economic effects of the sector, to inform more targeted and supportive measures for the fishing community.

5. Promote the nutritional benefits of SSF

Prioritize species that have high nutritional value and ensure their sustainable management, and highlight the benefits of consuming fish and seafood from SSF.

The Coastal 500 Pledge

To support healthy and sustainable fishing communities

Our coastal communities depend on healthy, productive oceans. As a leader in my community I recognize that coastal fisheries are essential for Our food, underpin Our economy and are an important part of our culture and way of life.

As a signatory to this pledge I am joining local leaders from around the world who seek to build healthy, prosperous, and sustainable coastal communities. Together we are empowering our constituencies to have clear access rights to their fisheries, good governance, local leadership, and participatory management to recover and Sustain Our coastal resources.



Through my leadership and in support of my community I commit to:

1. Promote responsible fisher behaviors that include registration, catch monitoring, participating in management and adhering to regulations;
2. Recognize, prioritize and advocate for local communities in their access to and use of coastal fisheries;
3. Build an empowered and informed community through participatory fisheries management that fairly and equitably regulates effort and employs an accountable and transparent decision-making process;
4. Endorse no-take reserves to replenish and sustain fish populations by protecting coastal habitats like coral reefs, mangrove forests and sea grass beds;
5. Invest in strengthening human capacity and financial resources to sustain community-based fisheries management;
6. Continue learning, teaching and inspiring others, by sharing lessons and experiences from my community with leaders from across the country and around the world.

Translate the Pledge Into Action

For each element of the pledge, you will find guidance on specific actionable steps you and your teams can take.

Why this is important

Understand the role of specific programs and actions on promoting healthier coastal waters and thriving communities.

What good looks like

Information to help you set targets for your community.

Essential actions

The activities your team should prioritize.

What else mayors can do personally

Additional things you can do to inspire others.

Bright spot

An example of a community that has effectively taken action.

Resources

Links to tools, materials and examples you and your team can use.

1

THE PLEDGE:

Promote responsible fisher behaviors that include registration, catch monitoring, participating in management and adhering to regulations.

Why this is important:

- Effectively managed fisheries need data on who is fishing and how much they are catching, so getting fishers registered and recording their catch is critical.
- Fishers who are part of the process of setting rules and regulations, they are more likely to follow them later on.
- Following rules and regulations to protect habitats and promote replenishment of fish stocks is the foundation of healthy fisheries.

What good looks like:

Adequate regulations, staff and funding to ensure:

- An annual complete and updated registry of fishers who are licensed to fish in the area being managed.
- Regular collection of fish catch data on fishery species prioritized for management.
- Conduct of regularly scheduled meetings and consultations with fishery stakeholders.
- Zero illegal, unreported and unregulated fishery practices.

Essential actions:

Fisher registration

- Update fisher registration data, for example through a registration drive, to make sure the list of fishers who are allowed to fish in the area you are overseeing is accurate.
- Provide access to the fisher registration system to community members and the management team.
- Publicize fisher registration lists in public places like the port or places of gathering



TIPS: Depending on your context and current resources, you can use a national registration system or create one for your community. Ideally, the register is digitized so it is easier to update and link to other systems, like social services. If a digital system is not yet possible in your community, start with something simpler.

THE PLEDGE: Promote responsible fisher behaviors that include registration, catch monitoring, participating in management and adhering to regulations.

Collecting fish catch data

- Confirm species that are important to the communities in your area.
- Establish or get access to a catch data collection system.
- Ensure species that are important to communities are monitored and included in catch data collection system.
- Make sure fishers, traders and buyers all understand the importance of having catch data and secure their support in collecting data regularly.



TIPS: If there is an existing system (usually from the national government), make sure you can connect to it, and that it includes the catch of fishers in your area. If you are setting up a system, work with government, NGO or academic partners. There are many methods and platforms available, so seek support in setting it up for your use. Examples of systems include OurFish and Abalobi.

Fisher participation

- Set a regular schedule for fisher meetings/consultations a few times a year at a place and time that most fishers, fish traders and fish workers can join.
- Communicate how community and fisher input is used by providing examples of, for example, changes in regulations, new activities, or advocacy actions you have initiated.
- Invest in building the capacity of community leaders and infrastructure, like a meeting room, for communities to discuss issues related to coastal and fisheries resources.

TIPS: Think about how your office can have frequent and diverse opportunities to engage with fishers to share information and solicit their feedback on the state of your coastal and fisheries resources, management plans and recommended measures. For example, you may lead a town hall focused on fisheries issues, an enforcement officer can join a community management body meeting, or the business development officer can organize an exchange between fish processors in the municipality.

THE PLEDGE: Promote responsible fisher behaviors that include registration, catch monitoring, participating in management and adhering to regulations.

Compliance with regulations

- Remind fishers of what the rules are, why they are important and how to do them correctly at the right place and time. For example, if there is a seasonal closure, broadcast reminders over radio or social media a month before it comes into effect, include recognizable pictures of the species that should not be caught in posters, social media posts, etc.
- Invest in personnel and infrastructure, such as watch towers, to fairly enforce regulations and consequences of violations.
- Document violations and report regularly back to the management team and the community what actions have been taken.

TIPS: Since regulations can vary throughout the year and between locations, have a yearly meeting with fishers, managers and enforcers to identify which rules are applicable to their coastal area. Organize them on a calendar and discuss what are the best places, moments, and channels to remind people of what they are, why they are important and how to follow them correctly. This will help you organize campaigns to effectively promote the rules and estimate the budget you need to do them regularly.

As the local leader, you can personally inspire action when you:

- Publicly recognize fishers and other community members that are registering, reporting catch, participating, and following rules.
- Share personal stories of why the desired behaviors (registering, reporting catch, etc.) are important to you.
- Incorporate, in public speeches, messages of pride in people doing the desired behaviors and how these actions evoke hope for the future.



THE PLEDGE: Promote responsible fisher behaviors that include registration, catch monitoring, participating in management and adhering to regulations.



Bright spot:

A well-branded campaign that is consistently used and sustained over multiple years is particularly effective. In Honduras, the ‘Pescando Para La Vida’ campaign was launched across 12 municipalities. It highlighted all four behaviors — registration, catch reporting, participating in meetings, and following the rules using various activities, like games, festivals, puppet shows etc. The mayors had their teams organize registration days, they would attend fisher meetings, and they would visit each others’ community activities to show support for the campaign.

Resources:

- [Fish Forever Global Behavior Adoption Tactics](#)
- [Our Fish Ambassador Package](#)
- [Facilitation Guide to Our Fish Community Event](#)

2

THE PLEDGE:

Recognize, prioritize and advocate for local communities in their access to and use of coastal fisheries.

Why this is important:

Local leaders understand how important small-scale fisheries are to local food security, jobs and economic development. But because most of the ocean is open access, local fishers often have to compete with better-equipped industrial fishing operators. And as overfishing becomes even more of a problem, the competition becomes greater. Small scale fishers need the help of their local leaders to ensure preferential rights for them.

What good looks like:

- National, sub-national and local policies reflect preferential rights for fishers from local communities. These can be in the form of exclusion zones, designation of municipal waters, registration and licensing requirements, etc.
- National and sub-national authorities recognize these rights and help local governments enforce policies protecting them.

Essential actions:

Policy

- Review national and local policies and identify whether preferential rights provisions are in place. If not, work with your legislative council and relevant sub-national/national government offices to pass appropriate policies.
- If no national policies are in place, there are usually some options for local governments that can be taken.
- Work with other local leaders to advocate for preferential rights for local fishers to the national government.

Story: [In Santa Fe, Honduran Fishers Celebrate A Hard-Fought Win](#)

THE PLEDGE: Recognize, prioritize and advocate for local communities in their access to and use of coastal fisheries.

Enforcement

- Work with national/sub-national authorities and the community to establish and implement an enforcement system and plan.
- Make sure boundaries of jurisdiction are clearly marked and known to all.
- Maintain consistent monitoring and review of the enforcement plan.



TIPS: Enforcement is usually something best done in collaboration with others. Invite your neighboring leaders to come together to work on joint enforcement concerns. There are good examples of alliances between several local governments that share the same waters and coordinate efforts and share costs.

As the local leader, you can personally inspire action when you:

- Speak out on behalf of preferential rights for local fishers in national and sub-national forums.
- Highlight the benefits to local livelihoods and food security when the catch of local fishers is prioritized.

Bright spot:

In the Philippines, the Constitution, the Local Government Code, and the National Fisheries Code all confirm that local governments have jurisdiction over their municipal waters (0–15 kms from shore), and that ‘municipal fishers’ (those with boats smaller than 3GT) have preferential rights in municipal waters. Many municipalities have successfully enforced these waters against the intrusion of larger boats.

Resources:

- [Environmental Law Institute SSF Law Toolkit](#)

3

THE PLEDGE:

Build an empowered and informed community through participatory fisheries management that fairly and equitably regulates effort and employs an accountable and transparent decision-making process.

Why this is important:

Fisheries that are very depleted cannot recover if fishing effort is not regulated. Even when catches are still good, managing effort to make sure overfishing will not take place is very important. But science-based regulation must be done in a way that all fishers understand and support — everyone should know how the fishery is doing, and why decisions about rules and regulations are being made.

What good looks like:

Adequate regulations, staff and funding to ensure:

- Basic information on the status of priority fisheries species are available and presented in a simple, understandable manner.
- Basic fisheries management principles are clear to everyone.
- A participatory system for fisheries management decision-making is established and implemented consistently.

Essential actions:

- Provide fishers and other stakeholders access to current catch data, either through online tools or materials like billboards in public places.
- Conduct learning sessions with fishers and fishery workers on basic principles of fisheries management.

- Hold regular (at least quarterly) meetings with fishers and other stakeholders, where data is presented, reviewed and proposed actions are discussed and agreed upon.
- When data is lacking, fishers and stakeholders should also be informed, and everyone should agree on a set of 'precautionary' regulations based on accepted fisheries science.
- Once a year, conduct a review of management plans and present findings and recommendations to the community.

TIPS: Ensure participation of different groups in the fishery management process, particularly women and youth, who play many diverse roles in fisheries, including gleaning, marketing and processing. Make sure the types of fisheries they engage in are included in planning and management, and that the meetings and consultations are conducted in a way that is also conducive for their participation.

Examples:

- [Fish Forever Portal: Understanding your Fishery and Ecosystem](#)

THE PLEDGE: Build an empowered and informed community through participatory fisheries management that fairly and equitably regulates effort and employs an accountable and transparent decision-making process.



As the local leader, you can personally inspire action when you:

- Highlight fisheries data and management in public reports and speeches.
- Encourage your team to collect gender-disaggregated data on fisheries and ensure that the information is included in assessments and planning activities.
- Invite fishers and fish workers to participate in meetings and ensure that their inputs are considered and addressed.

Resources:

- [FishMAT Tool](#)

4

THE PLEDGE:

Endorse no-take reserves to replenish and sustain fish populations by protecting coastal habitats like coral reefs, mangrove forests and sea grass beds.

Why this is important:

For fisheries to be productive and sustainable, the habitats of priority species need to remain intact and healthy. Important ecosystems like coral reefs, mangroves and seagrasses play important roles during a species' life cycle — whether they are newly hatched, juvenile or mature. Scientists have shown that protecting 20% of the critical habitat required by a particular species through no-take zones can be enough to ensure a healthy population, provided that there are also other practices to regulate effort. Combining strict protection with sustainable use can be the most effective way to sustain fisheries for communities.

What good looks like:

Policy, combined with adequate staff and funding to ensure:

- A network of no-take reserves covering at least 20% of habitats critical to priority species is decided on in a participatory manner.
- A legal instrument is in place to support these reserves.
- A body is designated and responsible for management and enforcement.
- Funding is allocated annually to ensure sustained efforts.

Essential actions:

Establishment (with the help of scientists or coastal resource experts)

- Identify the community's priority fishery species and the habitats that are critical to their life cycle.
- Designate at least 20% of these habitats as no-take reserves where fishing is not allowed and populations can recover. These reserves can be networks of smaller zones across a broader area, and can combine habitats for multiple species.
- Pass necessary legal instrument so that the area can be enforceable. This can be a local, sub-national or local ordinance.
- Designate a management body and develop a management and enforcement plan.



THE PLEDGE: Endorse no-take reserves to replenish and sustain fish populations by protecting coastal habitats like coral reefs, mangrove forests and sea grass beds.

Implementation

- Ensure consistent implementation of the management and enforcement plan, with corresponding penalties for violations.
- Evaluate performance against the management plan annually and agree on improvements.

TIPS: In the beginning, many fishers are reluctant to support no-take zones because their fishing activity will be restricted. But when they see them as reserves or ‘piggy banks’ where fish populations can increase and spill over to the areas where they are allowed to fish, they become more supportive. Exposing them to other areas where marine protected areas (MPAs) have been successful is a powerful way to convince fishers to establish reserves. Using smaller networks of reserves rather than fewer, larger ones also makes it less difficult for fisher to accept.

As the local leader, you can personally inspire action when you:

- Join meetings to convince fishers of the importance of no-take zones in replenishing fish populations.
- Seriously support enforcement activities, by ensuring that penalties are fairly administered to all violations.
- Allocate sufficient funds from the local government to support surveillance activities.
- Coordinate with other mayors in your area to facilitate shared management and enforcement.

Bright spot:

Story: [Bright Spots: Building a Network of Change in Honduras](#)

Resources:

- [MA+R Design Zoning Workshop](#)
- [Build Effective Management Bodies](#)
- [Fishery Management Plan Structure Guide](#)

5

THE PLEDGE:

Invest in strengthening human capacity and financial resources to sustain community-based fisheries management.

Why this is important:

Coastal fisheries are scattered across hundreds of thousands of communities, which is why they have always been difficult to manage using top-down approaches. Local governments are in the best position to ensure their sustainability, and when they are successful, local fishers and communities benefit. When local leaders like mayors prioritize coastal fisheries by ensuring there are well-trained staff with budgets to implement community-based management, the impact on local food supply, jobs and economic well-being is greatest.

What good looks like:

- Dedicated staff on the local government roster are assigned the role of advancing coastal resource and fisheries protection and management.
- The annual budget for the local government include a sufficient allocation for effective management of coastal fisheries.
- The local government is able to access national and sub-national technical and financial support to augment its resources.

Essential actions:

Budget

- Ensure you have an updated management plan with strategies needed for effective protection and management of your coastal resources.
- As much as possible, include critical strategies in your annual investment plans and budgets.
- Supplement your budgets with support from national government agencies and other sources.
- Identify innovative and non-traditional sources of funding, such as related budget categories, e.g. disaster preparedness, gender etc.

TIPS: Many local governments have been able to overcome the common challenge of limited resources. Some have partnered with provincial governments to secure additional staffing support, and many have also identified other types of funding they can access, such as special funds from national agencies.

THE PLEDGE: Invest in strengthening human capacity and financial resources to sustain community-based fisheries management.

Human Resources

- Designate someone on your team to oversee coastal resource and fisheries management. If possible, make this a full-time role. Key functions include: Planning, Technical advisory, Community engagement and communications, Policy, etc.
- Link with government and non-government entities to obtain necessary training and capacity-building for your teams. Secure support from academic institutions and the like to provide specialized capabilities.

As the local leader, you can personally inspire action when you:

- Advocate for budget allocations with your local council.
- Identify and enact policies that can secure funds annually.
- Develop proposals to national agencies for additional allocations to coastal resources and fisheries management.



Bright spot:

In Honduras, upon the request of a group of mayors and Rare, the Ministry of Environment agreed that local patronatos (community associations) would be eligible to receive funds from its special Wildlife Protection Fund provided they met certain registration requirements. Two groups have already completed the requirements and have received funds to be used for community management of their protected areas, and many more are working on theirs.

6

THE PLEDGE:

Continue learning, teaching and inspiring others, by sharing lessons and experiences from my community with leaders from across the country and around the world.

Why this is important:

Coastal 500 was conceived to be a network of local leaders all working towards thriving coastal communities, and we have seen how mayors have shared ideas and lessons, fueled cooperation, and inspired action by working together, either in small groups or as a full network in a country or even across the globe. Each member who contributes ideas and experiences helps spark another leader to do the same. With your help, Coastal 500 can continue to grow and make a difference with hundreds more leaders and communities.

What good looks like:

- Active Coastal 500 communications channels with contributions from members from regions and countries.
- Active presence of Coastal 500 leaders in regional, national and global forums.
- Activities led by Coastal 500 leaders are featured consistently in media, social forums and other discussion platforms and celebrated as good examples of sustainable coastal waters management.
- Coastal 500 leaders are seen as thought leaders on issues related to coastal communities by national governments and key stakeholders.

Essential actions:

- Join Coastal 500 communications channels.
- Share photos and stories from your community.
- Participate in in-person Coastal 500 meetings organized for your area.
- Participate in regional and global calls and share ideas.
- Accept opportunities to share your community's priorities and programs with other leaders, and spearhead efforts to engage national government officials.
- Visit Fish Forever's Learning Platform.

Bright spot:

Coastal 500 members have taken the stage at many national and global events, and they have spoken about the importance of prioritizing small scale fishers, calling for exclusive use zones for artisanal fishing, allocating climate resilience funds, and many more. They have highlighted how community led management can lead to improved habitats and fish stocks, increases in income and better well-being, and have shared their challenges with one another.



Coastal 500 members attended the Our Ocean Conference in Panama City, Panama in March 2023. (from left to right) Secretary of Environment Fabricia Nogueira da Penha (Augusto Corrêa, Pará, Brazil); Mayor Wilmer Guzman (Colon, Honduras); a Garifuna PhD student from Santa Fe; Diana Vasquez, Rare's Vice President of Central America; Mayor Noel Ruiz (Santa Fe, Honduras); Secretary of Fisheries Silvano Costa Da Silva (Magalhaes Barata, Brazil).



Coastal 500 member Spurgeon Miller, mayor of Guanaja, Honduras, at the United Nations Ocean Conference in Lisbon, Portugal. June 2022.

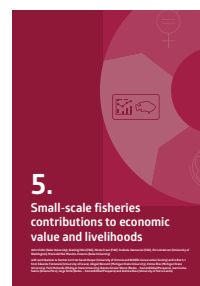


Coastal 500 members at The Earthshot Prize award ceremony in Singapore in November 2023. (from left to right) Mayor Alfredo Coro Jr (Del Carmen, Philippines); Mayor Noel Ruiz (Santa Fe, Honduras); Rocky Sanchez Tirona, Rare's Managing Director of Fish Forever; Mayor Mary Jean Te (Libertad, Philippines.)



The first ever regional meeting of Coastal 500 in the Mesoamerican reef was held in Guanaja, Honduras in May 2023. Members representing over 20 municipalities from Honduras and Guatemala met for two days on the island to exchange experiences, discuss challenges facing their communities and explore solutions to preserve and protect their coastline and the communities that depend on them.

The highlights were based on the following chapters of the **Illuminating Hidden Harvests** report:



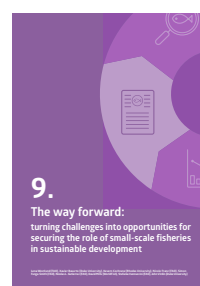
Chapter 5

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Chapter 6

Harper, S., Kleiber, D., Appiah, S., Atkins, M., Bradford, K., Choudhury, A., Cohen, P.J., de la Puente, S., de la TorreCastro, M., Duffy-Tumas, A., Fakoya, K., Fent, A., Fröcklin, S., Gopal, N., Gough, C., Gustavsson, M., Hapke, H.M., Hellebrandt, L., Ferrer, A.J., Johnson, J.L., Kusakabe, K., Lawless, S., Macho, G., Mangubhai, S., Manyungwa-Pasani, C., McDougall, C., Ojea, E., Oloko, A., Pedroza, C., Randrianjafimanana, T., Rasoloniriana, R., Robson, L., Romeo, C., Salgueiro-Otero, D., Snyder, H., Soejima, K. 2023. Towards gender inclusivity and equality in small-scale fisheries. In: FAO, Duke University & WorldFish. 2023. Illuminating Hidden Harvests: the contributions of small-scale fisheries to sustainable development. Rome, FAO; Durham, USA, Duke University; Penang, Malaysia, WorldFish.



Chapter 9

Westlund, L., Basurto, X., Cochrane, K., Franz, N., Funge-Smith S., Gutierrez N.L., Mills, D.J., Vannuccini S., Viridin J. 2023. The way forward: turning challenges into opportunities for securing the role of small-scale fisheries in sustainable development. In: FAO, Duke University & WorldFish. 2023. Illuminating Hidden Harvests: the contributions of small-scale fisheries to sustainable development. Rome, FAO; Durham, USA, Duke University; Penang, Malaysia, WorldFish.



Coastal 500, a global initiative supported by Rare, is the largest network of mayors and local government leaders committed to work towards thriving and prosperous coastal communities.

Rare inspires change so people and nature thrive.

Learn more at portal.rare.org and follow @Rare_org.