

The logo for the Oak Foundation. The word "OAK" is written in a large, dark blue, serif font. The letter "O" is a circle containing a light blue and white map of the world. Below "OAK" is the word "FOUNDATION" in a smaller, dark blue, serif font.

OAK
FOUNDATION

Small-Scale Fisheries Strategy: 2017-2022

Public Summary Document

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Context of an Oak Foundation Small-Scale Fisheries Strategy

The Oak Foundation has a long history of engaging with small-scale fisheries. For the last 15 years, Oak has supported work on issues related to marine protected areas, fisheries, and fishing communities in several regions, particularly Belize and the Mesoamerican Reef, the Arctic, and Europe. The Foundation's past work has led to an increasing recognition that marine conservation programs need to proactively address some of the challenges facing small-scale fisheries. In pursuing conservation work, program officers see a need to both address and collaborate with communities that are dependent on small-scale fisheries. Oak's experience, particularly in the Arctic and Belize, also highlights the defensive role that small-scale fishing communities, including indigenous peoples who rely on hunting and fishing for their livelihoods, can play in safeguarding ecosystems from threats such as industrial fisheries, shipping, coastal development, and oil and gas. As a result, the Foundation deeply appreciates the contributions that these communities make as stewards of their natural resources, and the value in empowering small-scale fishing. In a world increasingly under siege by climate change and development threats, empowering, improving, and safeguarding small-scale fisheries promises to improve the lives of people and protect the natural resources on which they depend.

The importance of small-scale fisheries

Wild-capture fisheries provide employment, food, and livelihoods for tens of millions of people globally. While large-scale, industrial fisheries attract the lion's share of the attention from governments, international development agencies, and philanthropy, many more people are dependent on small-scale fisheries for their economic well-being and livelihoods. Despite their importance, small-scale fisheries are often hidden or absent from national statistics, and frequently ignored in policy-making.

Although there is no precise definition for small-scale fishing, approximately a third of wild fish landings come from artisanal and subsistence fishermen. The most recent estimates suggest that small-scale fisheries account for over 90 percent of the 100 million commercial fishers, processors, and others employed along the fisheries value chain— only a third of whom are fishers. Roughly half are employed in marine fisheries – the other half in inland fisheries – making small-scale fisheries far and away the ocean's largest employer. Most of these small-scale fishing jobs are concentrated in developing economies, providing a critical source of employment and subsistence in economies with relatively limited opportunities. Small-scale fisheries are also a critical component of food security in the developing world. Fish provide between 15-20% of animal protein globally, and a much larger share for coastal fishing communities.

Small-scale fishing is also stitched into the cultural fabric of coastal communities. For many coastal communities, fishing represents not just an economic livelihood but a way of life that has shaped the development, stewardship values, and traditions that define social and cultural identities. Beyond the hard numbers of employment, healthy and vibrant small-scale fisheries provide critical cultural services to the communities that depend on them.

With millions of people dependent on small-scale fisheries, and their footprint on nearshore ecosystems, small-scale fisheries sit squarely at the intersection of social development and ecological stewardship.

Global interest in small-scale fisheries is growing

There is reason to believe that interest in small-scale fisheries work is growing. This momentum may present a unique opportunity to achieve reform at a broader scale. Within the last few years, small-scale fisheries have found new footing on the global agenda. In 2015, FAO completed its “Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries.” These guidelines were formulated through the consultation of more than 4,000 people and 120 nations, and are intended to serve as a framework to guide dialogue, policy processes, and actions at all levels of governance. FAO is committed to supporting the implementation of these guidelines and is already working in partnership with several countries using the guidelines to inform the development of fisheries policy. In addition, small-scale fisheries are central to the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goal 14 to “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development.” This goal acknowledges the importance of fisheries for livelihoods and calls for fish stocks to be maintained within biologically sustainable limits and to safeguard biodiverse marine areas.

Vision and Goals

The Oak Foundation’s vision is to build a field which effectively improves small-scale fisheries governance and empowers small-scale fishery leaders to safeguard marine ecosystems and protect their livelihoods.

Fishery managers are tasked with mediating between protecting biodiversity and natural resources, safeguarding food security, and protecting jobs and livelihoods. At their best, small-scale fisheries governance systems can balance all values, finding win-win-win solutions. However, these values often conflict with each other. The Oak Foundation is not solely dedicated to any single value. Instead, the Foundation views its role as promoting effective, sustainable small-scale fisheries *governance* to protect marine ecosystems and fishing communities. The Foundation intends to prioritize work mainly in the overlapping area between biodiversity protection and livelihoods, seeking solutions that benefit both communities and the ecosystem.

The Foundation hopes to substantially improve small-scale fisheries governance over the next fifteen years, ultimately benefitting the lives of millions of small-scale fishermen. The Foundation has four sets of supporting goals for small-scale fisheries governance reform:

1. Agenda Setting. *Small-scale fisheries are effectively highlighted as an important part of the global development agenda.* An international commitment needs to be further developed to address the governance of small-scale fisheries. This includes building on FAO’s efforts to develop the Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines, incorporating and highlighting small-scale fisheries in the context of the Sustainable Development Goal 14b, and continuing to develop a collection of research materials that emphasize the size and importance of small-scale fisheries.

2. Funding. *Substantially greater funding is directed toward small-scale fisheries governance reform.* As a single foundation, Oak has limited resources to support small-scale fisheries reform directly. Leverage, from other foundations, development agencies, and governments is essential for success. The Oak Foundation Environment Programme’s proximate goal is *leverage* its investments at least five-fold, allowing the foundation to have outsized influence on the small-scale fishing sector. That leverage could come in the form of multi-donor commitments and/or matched funding for other work. Building a community of learning amongst foundations interested in small-scale fisheries work would also contribute to achieving this goal.

3. Empowerment. *A thriving global network of small-scale fisheries leaders is educated and empowered to effect small-scale fisheries governance reform.* Presently, there is little coordinated support to the organizations that represent small-scale fishery associations. Similarly, there is no international effort to create a network capable of delivering capacity building (exchanges, training courses, legal support, etc.) to small-scale fisheries. The Foundation aims to fill this gap by supporting the empowerment of small-scale fishery leaders and pursuing the development of a small-scale fisheries research and training initiative.

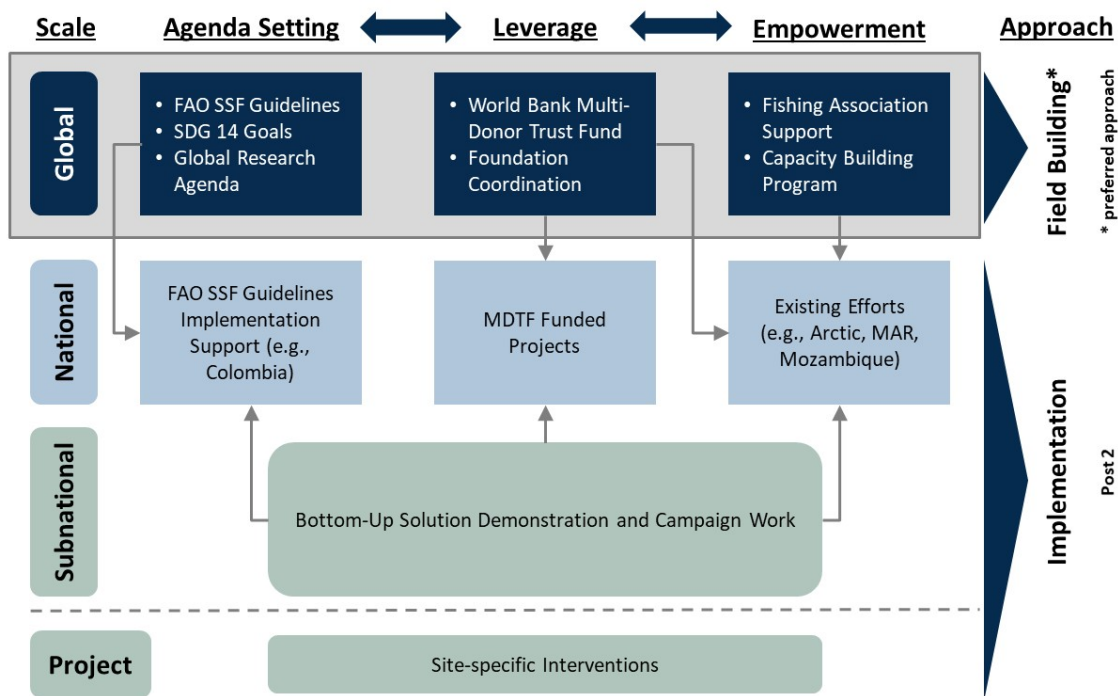


Figure 1 – Framework of the Oak Foundation’s four main approaches for small-scale fisheries reform

4. Implementation. *The global field-building efforts result in improved small-scale fisheries governance reform in at least three priority geographies.* Ultimately, the agenda setting, funding, and empowerment work need to translate to change on the water. Oak’s investments in the Arctic, Mesoamerica, and Mozambique should be continued and tracked. After reviewing the status of the Foundation’s small-scale fisheries efforts in 2020, future site-specific implementation work should be considered. The vision is that any such implementation work will be focused on time-limited opportunities as opposed to long-term, place-based commitments. We expect that implementation opportunities may be generated

through a multi-donor trust fund or through the ongoing Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines outreach efforts.

Approach

The Environment Programme’s small-scale fisheries strategy does not espouse a single management approach, tool, or set of interventions, but rather is focused more broadly on effective governance. We recognize that there is a wide array of management actions that can improve the lives of fishing communities and benefit the environment. These tools will vary by location, governance capacity, species, and fishery composition. There is no silver bullet for small-scale fisheries management.

1. The Programme will prioritize working at a high level in service to change on the water. That is most likely to involve a combination of global and national efforts.
2. The Programme is unlikely to pursue site-specific project work, except through re-granting mechanisms as necessary.
3. There is a necessary emphasis on seeking leverage through multilateral and government funds, while building a community of practice with private foundations.
4. The Foundation recognizes its own limitations as an agenda setter and will seek to cultivate high profile partners to elevate the agenda and lead the work.