

## **The SSF Hub: a new platform for connecting experiences and stories between small-scale fishery actors around the world**

**El SSF Hub: una nueva plataforma para conectar experiencias e historias entre actores de la pesca en pequeña escala de todo el mundo**

**Le Hub SSF: une nouvelle plateforme pour connecter les expériences et les histoires entre les acteurs de la pêche artisanale du monde entier**

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### **EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

Millions of people around the world depend on small-scale fisheries for their health, livelihoods and culture, but small-scale fisheries are vulnerable to the persistent threats they face such as the impacts of climate change, overfishing, and lack of representation in policy discussions and decision-making processes. Small-scale fisheries provide an important livelihood, especially in developing countries, with approximately 120 million people employed and women constituting almost half of the workforce. Furthermore, 90% of harvest from small-scale fisheries goes to human consumption, providing hundreds of millions of the world's people a source of food and essential micronutrients. Nevertheless, according to the FAO, the World Bank and WorldFish's study *Hidden Harvest: The Global Contribution of Capture Fisheries*, "small-scale fishing communities are among the poorest and most afflicted with social ills." Their contributions to achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs), national economies, food systems, and community well-being have largely gone unrecognized. As we've seen over the last year, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought on a range of new challenges and risks for the communities that depend on fisheries — from regulations limiting fishing activity to supply chain disruptions putting the health and sustenance of fishers and their families at further risk.

There is growing momentum towards recognizing SSF at the global level (most specifically seen through the adoption of the [Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication](#) (SSF Guidelines) and documenting their contributions (e.g., the forthcoming [Illuminating Hidden Harvests](#) study), but this has yet to be harnessed to achieve the broad, global reform that is needed. Furthermore, while there are many resources, tools and people working to support sustainable small-scale fisheries, it can be hard to find these tools or exchange experiences with others working towards this goal. Innovative solutions developed and implemented by community members to overcome challenges have not been shared or adopted widely. There has been a growing need for online and collaborative platforms that can bring together the diversity of resources and knowledge that exists to empower small-scale fishing communities to ensure their long-term sustainability and viability. The COVID-19 crisis has illustrated this need even more, with worldwide lockdowns and restrictive measures preventing people from travel impacting every step of the seafood supply chain making it especially critical to provide opportunities for fishers and other fishing professionals to share their experiences and connect with each other virtually.

To address this challenge and support implementation of the SSF Guidelines, a coalition of partners working in and with small-scale fisheries came together to discuss ways they could better support small-scale fishery actors and empower them to share their experiences with others around the world. Since November 2019, these partners — including environmental groups, fishing organization advisers and other experts in small-scale fisheries — have developed the [Small-Scale Fisheries Resource and Collaboration Hub](#) (SSF Hub): a new, interactive online space for small-scale fishers, fish workers, their communities and the people who work to support them. The SSF Hub is a multilingual, free-to-access platform designed to connect small-scale fishing communities worldwide so that they can share resources and their stories and experiences to support sustainable small-scale fisheries and resilient fishing communities.

The SSF Hub provides an opportunity for people to learn, share and grow together to strengthen small-scale fisheries governance and community development. Through the SSF Hub, people are able to easily access tools and resources they would not otherwise be able to obtain, while also being able to contribute their own experiences and ideas with others. People from all over the world and different types of fisheries can join the SSF Hub by creating a user profile, adding pictures from their communities and describing their fisheries and areas of interest. Access to multilingual content and a rotation of featured community highlights allows Hub members a chance to explore global stories without the barriers of language.

The SSF Hub was developed through a participatory process and the design of the Hub was largely driven by the feedback that was received through this consultative development process. Over 100 people from 19 different countries — representing fisher organizations, conservation groups and expert advisors — provided feedback throughout the Hub’s development. Prototype testing was conducted in July 2020 and Beta testing in October 2020 with Hub partners holding virtual consultations via Zoom, WhatsApp and Facebook to discover what participants wanted out of the platform. These conversations collected thoughts on what topics to cover, what essential interactive features to include and how to design the Hub to ensure it was user-friendly and met the needs of fishers and other users. With this input, the SSF Hub has been adapted into a platform that speaks to the needs and expectations of fishery stakeholders around the world.

The SSF Hub was publicly released in January of 2021, and we hope that it will continue to grow and evolve based on members’ feedback as they continue to use and interact with the site. Through the SSF Hub, we can bring together a mosaic of the diverse people involved in small-scale fisheries — by creating space to share their stories, experiences and resources to inspire others. The strength of the SSF Hub lies in its diversity and in its role as a place to highlight the importance of, and contributions toward, sustainable fishing practices, food security and poverty alleviation around the world.

**KEYWORDS:** small-scale fisheries, capacity building, sustainable fisheries, communities

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