

THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES IN CONSERVATION

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Abstract

Small-scale fisheries are no exceptions to the requirements of staying within the biological bounds of sustainability, by purposively limiting fish harvests, and of maintaining productivity of oceans and freshwater systems, by protecting ecosystem health and habitat quality. However, while these fisheries, like all others, have the potential to pose conservation problems, they are also crucial to the solution. This is especially the case since those engaged in small-scale fisheries typically have most at stake in the stewardship of their fishing spaces, contribute important local knowledge to fishery governance, and are on the front lines in facing the implications of non-fishery impacts on the world's aquatic systems, such as land-based pollution, industrial development and the like. This paper examines the role of small-scale fisheries in local-level community-based conservation, describing several conservation success stories that are having positive impacts locally while also representing models that are being adopted elsewhere. While these conservation initiatives often operate "under the radar", perhaps little known to international agencies and national governments, they are collectively at least as effective as more large-scale efforts. This presentation draws lessons from these experiences that are relevant to governments, the fishing sector, coastal communities and beyond. A key message is that concrete support within fishery governance for the conservation role of small-scale fisheries can help multiply the conservation successes many times.