



# Namibia

## Socio-economic development considerations to strengthen the small-scale fisheries ecosystem

This socio-economic assessment for small-scale fisheries was undertaken during the development process of [National Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries \(NPOA-SSF\)](#). The NPOA-SSF is the Government's action plan for small-scale fisheries and is premised on the [Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication \(SSF Guidelines\)](#).

### Background

Namibia's small-scale fisheries sector has been identified as an important socio-economic development sector that can support the livelihoods of small-scale fisheries actors (including small-scale fishers, fish trader and fish processors), their households, fishing communities and local economies. This has been established and articulated in Namibia's National Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries (NPOA-SSF).

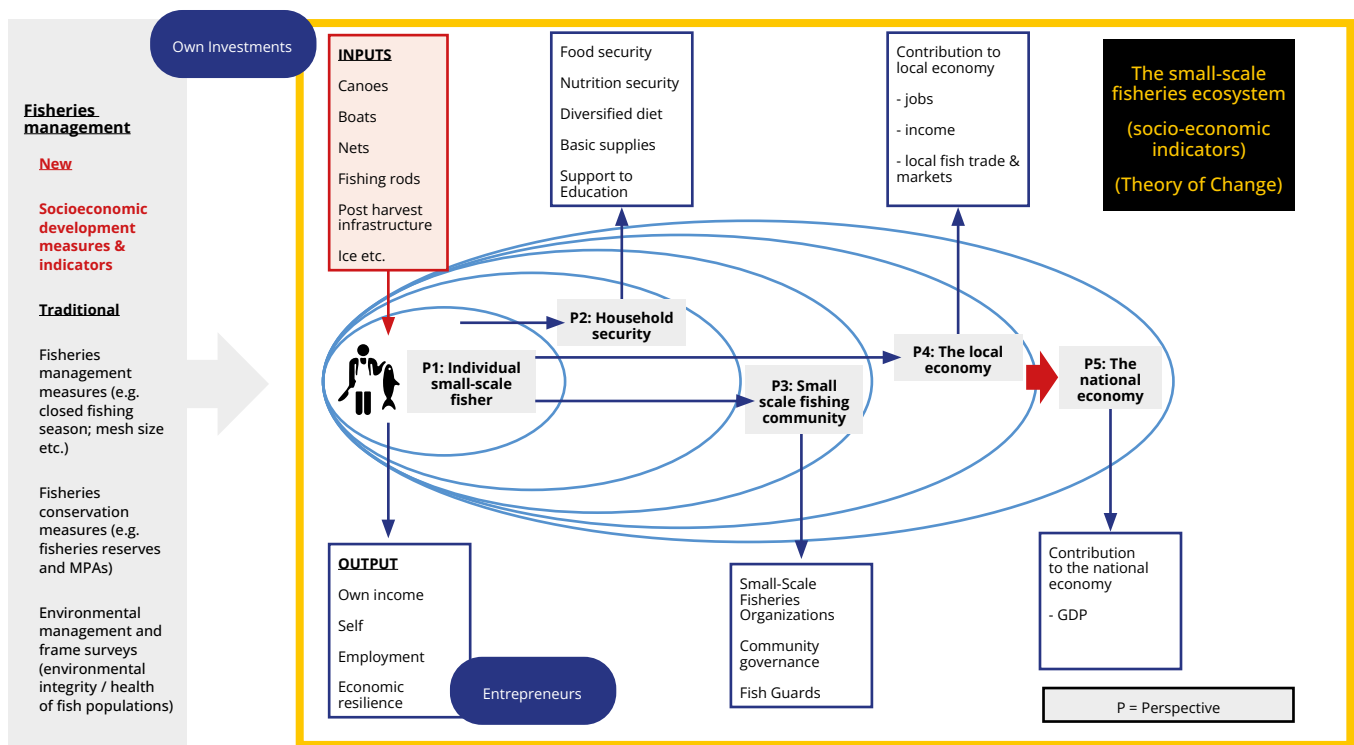
In recognition of the growing importance of small-scale fisheries, the NPOA-SSF identifies key components that define Namibia's small-scale fisheries ecosystem with a view to establishing a socio-economic baseline. This article compares the indicators between small-scale fisheries and small-holder agriculture with a view to justifying why support across both sub-sectors should be considered as equally important in Namibia.

### Traditional management considerations in small-scale fisheries

Traditional management measures and considerations in small-scale fisheries focused largely on resource management, conservation and research approaches and frameworks and did not fully consider the human dimension in small-scale fisheries. This situation is different to for example small-holder agriculture, where small-holder farmers have received recognition as a socio-economic development sector and as such, receive financial, development and other forms of direct support from government and other development partners, and continue to do so.

### The small-scale fisheries ecosystem

In order to establish key socio-economic indicators for small-scale fisheries, it is important to recognize the ecosystem in which they operate within their local and national economies.



Hitula Alushe and Hilundwa Katrina, 2023

Figure 1. The small-scale fisheries ecosystem (socio-economic indicators) (Hitula, A and Hilundwa, K, 2023)

Figure 1 presents a map of Namibia's small-scale fisheries ecosystem and gives recognition to the various traditional management measures (fisheries management; fisheries conservation and environmental management) across the five (5) perspectives (individual small-scale fisher; household security; small-scale fishing community; the local economy and the national economy). A new proposed measure is the socio-economic development contribution measure, which takes into account the human dimensions within the small-scale fisheries sector.

The diagram further illustrates a number of primary socio-economic indicators that justify the valuable contribution that small-scale fisheries make to sustainable local development and economic resilience within Namibia's fishing communities. At the moment, the small-scale fisheries sector is not valued and as such, these indicators are not quantified, measured, or taken into account. As a result, policy makers do not make direct attributions to the value that these indicators carry, which attribution is

directly related to the support that the small-scale fisheries sector should receive in order to unlock this value. Mapping Namibia's small-scale fisheries ecosystem across the various perspectives is a first attempt to establish a common framework and set of indicators that can be used to measure the socio-economic contribution of small-scale fisheries across the various perspectives.

### A comparative analysis (small-scale fisheries / small-holder agriculture)

Understanding the inputs, outputs and socio-economic indicators for small-scale fisheries is important for managing the human dimensions within the small-scale fisheries sector and planning interventions to improve socio-economic development, employment, and decent work in line with principle 8 of the SSF Guidelines. The various output indicators for each perspective are important and can be used to plan long-term adaptive management capacity for small-scale fisheries actors; the sustainable use of small-scale fisheries resources and long-term conservation interventions.

*Table 1: A comparative analysis of socio-economic indicators across five perspectives for small-scale fisheries and small-holder agriculture*

Perspective (P)	Socio-economic Indicators	Relevance	
		Small-scale fisheries	Small-holder agriculture
P1: Individual	Own income	✓	✓
	Self-employment	✓	✓
	Economic resilience	✓	✓
P2: Household security	Food security	✓	✓
	Nutrition security	✓	✓
	Diversified diet	✓	✓
	Basic supplies	✓	✓
	Support to education	✓	✓
P3: Community	Organization	✓	✓
	Community Governance	✓	✓
	Community Policing	✓	
P4: Local economy	Employment / (guards)	✓	✓
	Income	✓	✓
	Local trade and markets	✓	✓
P5: National economy	Contribution to GDP	✓	✓

The small-scale fisheries and small-holder agriculture sub-sectors share a common set of indicators, however national development interventions have been skewed towards the small-scale agriculture sector with little to no assistance provided to small-scale fisheries. A paradigm shift is required to support both sub-sectors to achieve their potential to contribute to local economies and national development targets.

The assessment went further to provide a comparative analysis between small-scale fisheries and small-holder agriculture and the findings indicate that the two sub-sectors share a majority of common indicators. The results therefore justify the need to provide equal financial or development support to the two sub-sectors.

### Key findings

There is currently no established framework to assess the socio-economic indicators that are relevant to the human dimension within small-scale fisheries communities in Namibia. This makes planning to improve livelihoods extremely challenging. Namibia's National Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries (NPOA-SSF) advocates responsible governance of tenure (principle 5a of the SSF Guidelines) which provides for the realization of the human

dimensions in small-scale fisheries (including human rights, food security, poverty eradication, sustainable livelihoods, social stability, housing security, economic growth, and rural and social development). These principles are also aligned with a number of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To achieve these ambitious goals and targets, this assessment advocates for the adoption of the small-scale fisheries ecosystem and its indicators as a management framework for small-scale fisheries and calls for a paradigm shift within the policy making space. The proposed framework can benefit from further input by key small-scale fisheries stakeholders.

## Way forward

In order to improve the small-scale fisheries ecosystem, a sustainable framework to measure the socio-economic contribution of small-scale fisheries has been recommended.

A number of practical approaches and implementation strategies required to strengthen the small-scale fisheries ecosystem have been identified and can include the following (among others):-

- Informal finance (micro finance / credit) for small-scale fishers;
- Renewable energy infrastructure (e.g., solar ice makers; solar freezers);
- Value chain support in the post-harvest sub-sector;
- Securing local, regional and market linkages and connecting small-scale “fishpreneurs”;

- Support to entrepreneurship including business development support and incubation to strengthen business development for small-scale “fishpreneurs”.

Small-scale fisheries is currently excluded from the just energy transition. The sector can however benefit from renewable energy infrastructure which can improve post-harvest fish losses and result in more food available for household food security. Reducing fish loss can also lead to improved trade and as a result, improved income for small-scale fishers.

## Conclusion

This assessment presents a socio-economic indicator framework as a new and innovative approach to support the human dimension in small-scale fisheries management as well as their socio-economic development. A comparison with the small-holder agriculture sector indicates that the two sub-sectors share common indicators, however both sub-sectors do not necessarily receive equal financial or development support. A paradigm shift is proposed among policy makers to narrow the identified resource and support gaps since this may enable the realization of improved returns within the small-scale fisheries sector.

## Resources

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Namibia's National Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries (NPOA-SSF) [Namibia's National Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries \(NPOA-SSF\) | United Nations in Namibia](#)

The Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication [Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication \(fao.org\)](#)

