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## The importance of small-scale fisheries for food security and sovereignty in Madagascar

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In Madagascar, food insecurity has increased considerably over the last ten years, affecting almost 33% of the population in 2022, or around 8.8 million people. To better understand the contribution of the coastal and inland small-scale fishery (SSF) sector to food supply, we carried out a multidisciplinary study in 2022 as part of the Illuminating Hidden Harvest (IHH) worldwide program. We combined analysis of fishery statistics from the Ministry of Fisheries and the Blue Economy (MPEB), a review of previous research studies on small-scale fisheries in Madagascar, and a field survey in seven coastal and inland regions through in-depth interviews with fishers and community members about value chains, livelihoods, and food systems. The results showed that around 242,000 fishers (both men and women) are directly involved in small-scale fisheries in more than 2,500 villages across the country. Fish products from this sector accounted for 59% of national fish production and provided a vital source of nutrients (e.g., proteins, iron, calcium and omega-3s) to the Malagasy population, and more particularly in coastal fishing villages. In economic terms, the sector provided income for nearly 1.5 million people and contributed 6.6% of overall Malagasy exports. As an accessible, healthy, and major source for food, SSF also plays a fundamental role in food and nutritional security across the country through inland market networks. However, the sector faces major challenges, including coastal habitat degradation (e.g., in mangrove and coral reef ecosystems), the likely effects of climate change, and increasing fishing pressure due to population growth and rising domestic and export market demand. Appropriate management strategies and policy are therefore needed to enhance and sustain SSF and minimize post-harvest loss. Promoting the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries (SSF Guidelines) can support the establishment of inclusive governance frameworks and good resource management practices. Strengthening the commitment and implementation of these Guidelines can therefore help strengthening SSF's contribution to food systems and, consequently, securing food security and sovereignty and poverty eradication in Madagascar.

Key words: coastal communities, fish, poverty, sustainability

