

## **Wealth, rights, and resilience: An agenda for governance reform in small-scale fisheries**

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Panel: Marine Transformations and Adaptive Governance

In this paper, we present an analytical framework to assess the governance context for small-scale fisheries development and to design interventions that enhance the resilience of small-scale fisheries livelihoods. Our premise is that there is no singular right answer to the appropriate balance of goals for fisheries development, and therefore for governance reforms that influence or target the fisheries sector. Wealth-based, rights-based, and resilience-based approaches to governance reform affecting small-scale fisheries serve as useful counterweights to one another, keeping us mindful as analysts and practitioners that a too-singular focus on any one dimension—resource rents and economic opportunity, tenure rights and security, or risk and vulnerability—can lead us astray.

Historically, most analysts specialized in the sector have taken a fisheries-centric perspective, as if governance depends primarily or exclusively on fisheries sector management institutions and policy. Yet, for small-scale fishers in developing countries, the governance context affecting their livelihood opportunities often has as much or more to do with institutions, policies, and patterns of decision-making outside the sector. Analysis of the governance context for small-scale fisheries development, we argue, should focus on three key dimensions: representation, distribution of authority, and mechanisms of accountability.

Because relationships of power and accountability are emergent, which is to say they are shaped by the actions of a wide range of actors over time, governance reforms affecting small-scale fisheries concern partial changes to existing systems. While it would be counterproductive to suggest a “reform package” that should be implemented regardless of the country and local context, we conclude by outlining a set of principles to guide identification and assessment of reform options, based on a review of the experience with governance reforms in developing country small-scale fisheries to date.