

# Oceans & Fisheries



**The Rockefeller Foundation's Oceans & Fisheries work aims to increase the health and productivity of coastal fisheries by replacing unsustainable fishing practices with innovative approaches that recognize the full, long-term value of sustainable marine ecosystems and that improve the economic, nutritional, and social conditions of the poor and vulnerable people whose well-being depends on these near-shore fisheries.**

## THE PROBLEM

Across the globe, fisheries and aquaculture provide both livelihoods and food security for billions of people. The demand for fish, however, is growing and increasingly hard to



meet, spurring overfishing, and destructive and sometimes also illegal fishing practices. This is further driven by a misallocation of incentives and investments, in which short-term profits come at the expense of long-term viability. Scientific consensus makes it clear that if current trends continue, the global marine ecosystem risks collapse. Meanwhile, as fish stocks grow scarce, so do the livelihoods opportunities created by fisheries. This increases the social, health and economic vulnerabilities of many fishery dependent communities.

## THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION'S VISION

There are a number of policy and management approaches that show promise in addressing this broken system. If implemented well and in a coordinated manner, results can come quickly and contribute to building long-term resilience to the changing conditions of marine ecosystems. Of particular interest are ways to seed and grow ecosystem-based community management of local fisheries. The Rockefeller Foundation sees an imperative to learn whether these tested approaches can work at scale to prevent further ecosystem damage, while also preserving the livelihoods of the millions of people engaged day-to-day in the harvest, processing, and distribution of fish.



Over the next year, the Rockefeller Foundation is exploring the opportunity for such an impact at scale in part through innovative finance, which can create a window for transitioning to sustainable fishing by compensating for the necessary short term reductions in fish catch. Innovative finance can also help to increase the value of and demand for fish at different points in the supply chain, creating greater market opportunities. This allows for risk to be distributed more equitably across the seafood value chain, while simultaneously testing possibilities for driving the demand for sustainable fish catch.

On a parallel track, scaling can be further supported through policy shifts that regulate destructive fishing practices, particularly of industrial fleets. This will complement efforts to create an enabling environment and incentivize sustainable co-management of small scale fishery ecosystems between fisher communities and governments in a way that

draws on local input and creates incentives for sustainable management. Evidence demonstrates that when fisher groups are involved in making and enforcing management decisions, policies are more durable and lead to cascading community-level benefits, including stronger social cohesion, increased trust, and better conflict resolution.

The Rockefeller Foundation is guided by a commitment to equity and ensuring that poor and marginalized populations are involved in decision making, benefit from new approaches to financing, policy changes, and ultimately from healthier fisheries today and long into the future. Women in particular are frequently left out of financing and policy discussions related to fisheries management even though they comprise nearly 50% of those involved in the fisheries value chain. The Oceans & Fisheries initiative will actively seek to include women and ensure that they too yield direct benefits from positive shifts in this arena.

**For more information, please visit our website at [rockefellerfoundation.org/oceans-and-fisheries](http://rockefellerfoundation.org/oceans-and-fisheries)**