

Baffling Shades of Blue

The much touted Blue Economy can easily become a new label to justify old injustices – or a means of addressing the concerns of small-scale fisheries

There is so much talk of ‘Blue Economy’ and ‘Blue Growth’, much of which is confusing and contradictory, especially in terms of its impact on small-scale fishers. That is why the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) is preparing a regional diagnostic programme to enquire how the Blue Economy, in discourse and practice, plays out in 10 Latin American countries, from the perspective of artisanal and small-scale fishworkers. The countries are: Brazil, Chile, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala. The programme resonates with calls by fishworker organizations (FWOs) worldwide for a profound rethink of ‘blue’ agendas and investment.

marine resources and biodiversity in Latin America.

The complexity and urgency to face the haunted legacies of the ocean economy towards small-scale fisheries (SSF) is outlined through a literature-based overview of the intersection between the Blue Economy and justice/equity in the SSF context; and a synthesis of major concerns and opportunities that have been voiced out internationally, thereby providing a context for regional analysis. The assessment’s methodology included key informant interviews and review of science-policy documents, and amalgamation of finance and conflict/injustice reports from various online data sets to critically assess information on international and national coastal-ocean (blue) economy narratives and finance, governance frameworks—marine protected areas, coastal zone management, environmental licensing and marine spatial planning—and reported conflicts and injustices towards SSFs. Based on the later assessment, the authors finally shortlisted what they considered the main challenges and opportunities for SSFs in the context of ‘blue’ agendas in each country. So let’s briefly navigate the range of findings to be elicited by this regional diagnostic.

The study aims to support the development of inclusive and sustainable ocean agendas and advocacy strategies by FWOs to address the challenges and opportunities arising from Blue Economy agendas in Latin America.

A team of 18 Latin American researchers and extensionists working with artisanal fishers has drafted the report. Its summary version will now undergo scrutiny by study informants and their FWOs in the upcoming months. The authors are undertaking an assessment of policy, legislation and investment, and also evaluating competing definitions of the Blue Economy in the region. It aims to support the development of inclusive and sustainable ocean agendas and advocacy strategies by FWOs to address the challenges and opportunities arising from Blue Economy agendas in Latin America. The report advocates for ecosystem- and human-rights-based approaches to be adopted in sustainable use and management of coastal and

Online databases

To start taking stock of the impacts of the coastal-ocean economy on SSFs, the study analyzed information from four online social-environmental justice databases. They are: Environmental Justice Atlas (by University of Barcelona); Information System on Small-Scale Fisheries (by TBTI); Map of conflicts involving environmental injustice and health in Brazil (by Fiocruz); and Map of conflicts involving artisanal fisheries in Brazil (by Conselho Pastoral dos Pescadores).

These online platforms offer strong evidence of injustices ensuing from the Blue Economy sectors or drivers:

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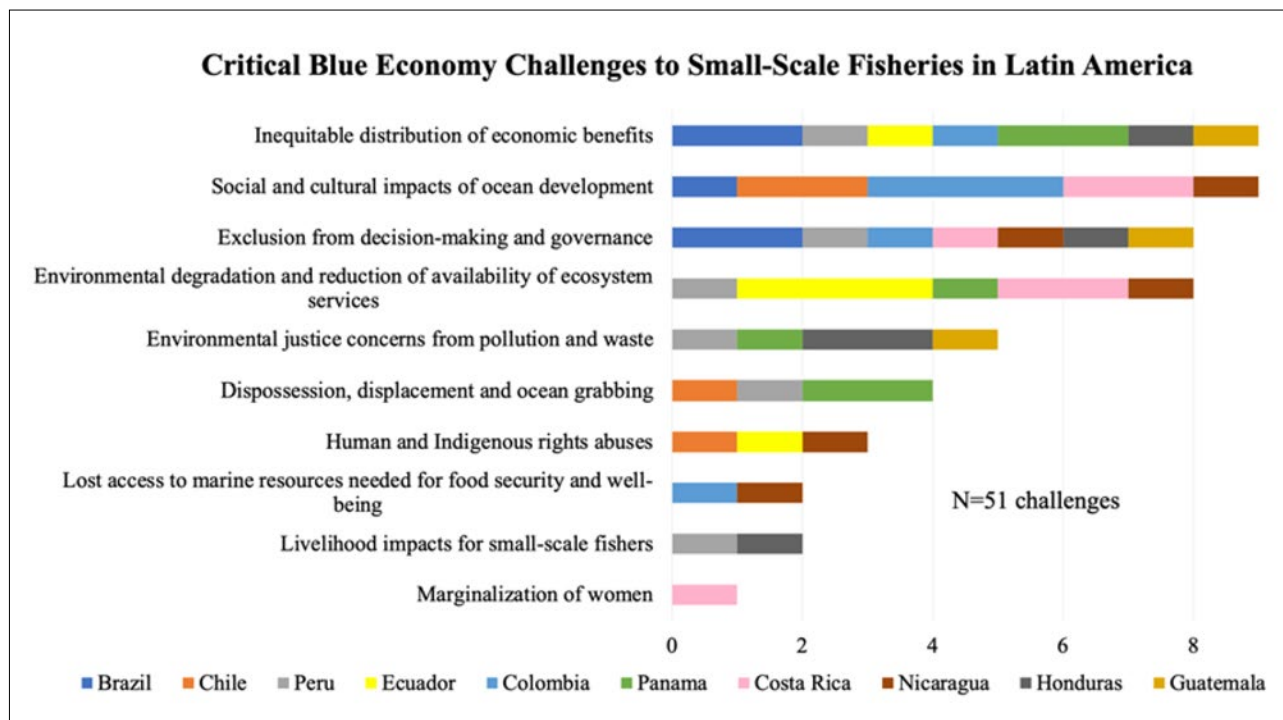


Figure 1: Geographic distribution of 51 critical Blue Economy challenges to small-scale fisheries in Latin America

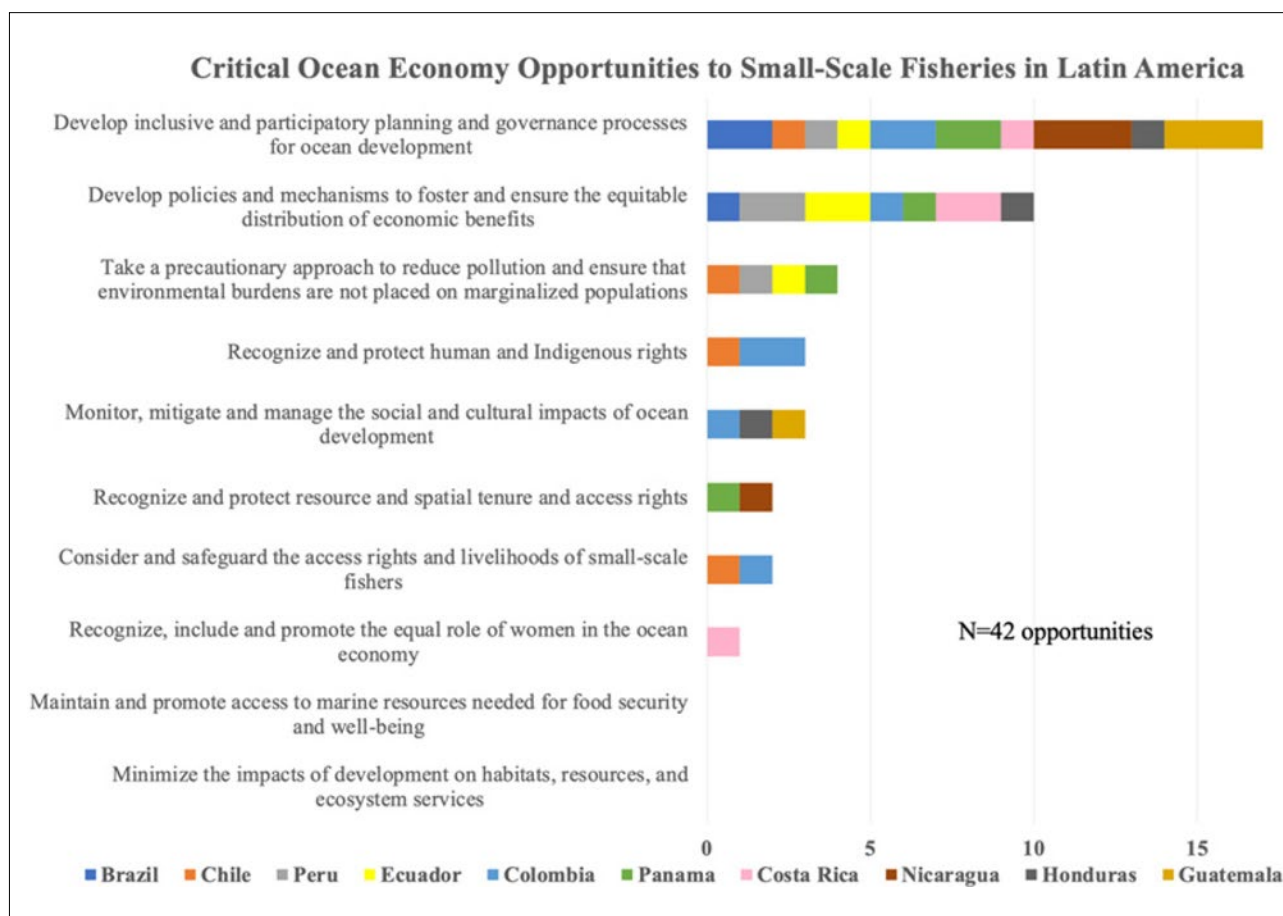


Figure 2: Geographic distribution of 42 critical ocean economy opportunities for small-scale fisheries in Latin America

fisheries and aquaculture; mining; the energy matrix; agriculture and livestock; environmental resource management and conservation; tourism; coastal state development and territorial use/occupation; transport, infrastructure and logistics; other industries; and, public sector and public policies.

A total of 192 conflicts/injustices were identified and critically assessed, pointing to sub-national gaps in social-environmental justice mapping and representation in coastal states across the region. In summary, the range of conflict/injustice records comprises multiple associations to health and goods under dispute, providing a glimpse of the informational complexity involved in the assessment and representation of social struggle at the regional level.

The report also kicks off a collaborative process of critically appreciating the operation of 11 international organizations—international United Nations agencies, regional intergovernmental organizations and major banks, to name a few—in relation to Blue Economy strategies and finance in Latin America. Among these, the study conducted an independent scanning of the investment

resource management and conservation (n=271), territorial development and use/occupation, energy, tourism and transport infrastructure and logistics; it was ahead of other industries, agriculture and livestock and mining sectors. A total of 47 global and regional blue investments—involving two or more countries—were also identified, predominantly in the area of environmental resource management and conservation (n=25) and particularly with direct implication to SSFs (n=15).

The implementation of these projects since 2012 has created an international ‘blue advocacy arena’ that worryingly lacks minimum or forefront participation of SSFs organizations. Furthermore, this report shows the troublesome lack of readily available information of the geographic distribution of impacts—positive or negative—of financial investments by major international banks and other donors; a major challenge in the way of fishworkers and supportive socio-environmental justice organizations to size up national and regional advocacy responses.

Underpinning the regional diagnostic of investments and conflicts reported above, the bulk of the report consists of a series of 10 nationally-based assessments aimed at starting to unveil how Blue Economy discourse and practice play out from the perspective of small-scale fisheries in each country. The study offers an overview of the context of small-scale fisheries integration—or lack thereof—within national coastal and ocean governance and economy-related policies; it identifies pressing challenges and opportunities for equitable developmental and governance dynamics in the face of the profile of reported conflicts and injustices in each country.

Inequitable distribution

The current assessment stage identified 51 critical challenges and 42 critical opportunities for SSFs, spanning all 10 key considerations to advance equity and human rights in ‘blue’ initiatives recorded in the broad literature on social injustice in an ocean context. The regional meta-analysis highlights the inequitable distribution of economic benefits; the widespread presence of social and cultural impacts of ocean

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profile of five major donors in the region, namely, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); The World Bank Group; the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB); the Global Environment Facility (GEF); and the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF).

This assessment rendered over 7,000 national development investment projects in the region from 2012 to 2020. Of these, at least 494 can be classified as ‘blue’ investments predominantly in the coastal provinces of all assessed countries. Brazil is the largest recipient of such investments and Nicaragua received the smallest share. The fisheries and aquaculture sector ranked sixth behind environmental

Fishworker and civil society organizations consulted for the regional assessment:

1. World Forum of Fish Harvesters & Fish Workers (International)
2. World Forum of Fisher People (International)
3. Future of Fish (Peru)
4. Artisanal Fishermen and Fisherwomen Movement (Brazil)
5. Brazilian Future Ocean Panel – Ocean Horizons program (Socio-environmental Justice Research-Action Team)
6. Bocatoreños Artisanal Fishermen Union (Panama)
7. National Federation of Artisanal Fishers of the Republic of Panama
8. Central American Confederation of Artisanal Fishing
9. National Confederation of Artisanal Fishermen of Chile
10. Nicaraguan Fisheries Federation
11. Association of Artisanal Fishermen of the Gulf of Fonseca Federation of Fishing Co-operatives of Ecuador
12. Magdalena University (Colombia)
13. CoopeSolidar R.L. (Costa Rica)
14. Costa Rica Federation of Small-Scale Artisanal Fishers
15. C-Codem (Network of Communities and Organizations Defending the Mangrove Ecosystem)

International organizations with ‘blue’ agendas (coastal-ocean) across the 10 Latin American countries

1. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)
2. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
3. Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC-UNESCO)
4. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
5. The Andean Parliament
6. Central American Integration System
7. The World Bank Group
8. Inter-American Development Bank
9. Global Environment Facility (GEF)
10. Development Bank of Latin America

development; the exclusion of SSFs from decision-making and governance; and troubling environmental degradation and reduction of ecosystem services. These principal concerns underpin regional advocacy by FWOs. This scenario points to an urgent necessity for developing policies and mechanisms to foster and ensure the equitable distribution of economic benefits, and much more inclusive and participatory planning and governance processes for ocean development in Latin America.

While various differences and commonalities among countries have been outlined in the above analysis, further discussion between FWOs and supportive research, education and extension networks should now be taken to scrutinize the findings and bring the assessment gradually closer to the reality of fishers’ social struggles. This understanding motivates the research team to remain committed to this collaborative assessment, suggesting a few reasonable next steps: One, supporting the development of a fisher-to-fisher marine learning network

to advance collaborative mapping of conflicts/injustices to support evidence-based advocacy concerning the Blue Economy and small-scale fisheries interactions in Latin America; two, seeking formal review, refinement of this preliminary assessment by national and regional FWOs; and, three, publishing and disseminating the results.

In the meantime, ICSF will continue to support FWOs to expand understanding and reaction to the violations of small-scale fishers’ human rights and the disruption of their livelihood and well-being. In the short term, this conversation can build upon other activities under preparation for the 2022 International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture and strengthen the primacy of fisherfolk voices in shaping a sustainable future in coastal and ocean territories across Latin America. 📍

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https://www.icsf.net/images/samudra/pdf/english/issue_78/4334_art_Samudra%20Report%20No%2078%20Planning%20Blues%20by%20Leopoldo%20Cavaleri.pdf

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Away from Blue Growth and towards the Blue Commons?

<http://cape-cffa.squarespace.com/en-blog/2019/3/4/from-blue-growth-to-blue-commons>