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REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-55777

Title: "Just Transition Pathways for Small-Scale Fisheries: A Carbon Footprint and Socio-Economic Assessment in Sindangan, Zamboanga del Norte"

Recommendation:

Accept after minor revision.....

	Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality		✓			
Techn. Quality				✓	
Clarity		✓			
Significance			✓		

Reviewer Name: Faheem Abdul Muneeb

Reviewer's Comment

This manuscript presents an empirically rich and policy-relevant assessment of small-scale fisheries in Sindangan, Philippines, integrating socio-economic profiling with carbon footprint and efficiency analysis. By combining demographic data, asset ownership, governance conditions, and fuel-based emissions accounting, the study advances a compelling argument for "just transition" pathways that align climate mitigation with livelihood security. The topic is timely and well aligned with SDGs 7, 8, 10, 13, and 14, and the paper makes a meaningful contribution to fisheries sustainability and climate governance debates in the Global South.

Contribution and Empirical Strength

The study's main strength lies in its integrated framework linking social well-being, gendered livelihoods, governance constraints, and emissions intensity. The findings on vessel rental dominance and non-registration (Figures 5–6), and their interpretation as structural rather than behavioral failures, are particularly strong. The carbon accounting exercise, based on IPCC fuel factors (Table 1), is methodologically sound and clearly presented. The comparison of CO₂ emissions and carbon efficiency across barangays (Tables 2–3) effectively demonstrates how operational practices and trip frequency, rather than technology alone, drive emissions outcomes.

REVIEWER'S REPORT**Methodological and Analytical Considerations**

The mixed socio-economic survey and fuel-use matrix approach is appropriate for a case study and well executed. However, the limited sample size (35 respondents) constrains generalizability and should be more explicitly framed as an exploratory assessment. Some sections, particularly in the discussion, are overly extended and could be tightened by reducing repetition and focusing on synthesis rather than restatement of results.

Clarity and Presentation

The manuscript is generally clear and well structured, but it is longer than necessary. Condensing the literature review and discussion sections would improve readability. Minor language editing and formatting standardisation are also required. Figures and tables are informative and well integrated into the narrative.

Final Recommendation

Overall, this is a strong, empirically grounded, and conceptually relevant study that offers valuable insights into low-carbon and socially just transitions in small-scale fisheries. With minor revisions focusing on condensation, clearer positioning of limitations, and editorial refinement, the manuscript will be suitable for publication.

Decision: Accepted with minor revisions.