



Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in fisheries and aquaculture



©FAO/Jennifer Gee

▲ A woman sorting the catch at the dock in Muscat.

Introduction

This fact sheet presents an overview of current gender equality and women's empowerment issues in the fisheries sector. Women's engagement in fisheries can be viewed from social, political and technical perspectives, all of which show that the role of women is often underestimated. This inadequate recognition of women's contributions hampers the sustainable development process, resulting in increased poverty and food insecurity.

This fact sheet provides information on policy, institutions and planning processes; statistical dimensions in gender analysis; and specific concerns in the field of fisheries industries. It identifies lessons learned and opportunities for gender mainstreaming at macro, meso and micro-operational levels.

The information provided does not represent an exhaustive analysis of the subject, but suggests some relevant approaches for continuing the efforts made over the years in light of women's crucial role in sustainable fisheries and aquaculture development.

Why consider gender issues in the fisheries sector?

In the fisheries sector, men and women engage in distinct and often complementary activities that are strongly influenced by the social, cultural and economic contexts they live in. Male-female relations vary greatly and are based on economic status, power relations, and access to productive resources and services.

In most regions, fish catching is male-dominated. Ocean-going boats for offshore and deep-sea fishing have male crews, while in coastal artisanal fishing communities women often manage smaller boats and canoes. Women are mostly responsible for skilled and time-consuming onshore tasks, such as making and mending nets, processing and marketing catches, and providing services to the boats. In western Africa and Asia, as much as 60 percent of seafood is marketed by women, and in many parts of the world they also do a significant amount of shellfish gathering/clam gleaning – a fishery activity that is often under-recognized, or not recognized at all.

Sectoral statistical systems (such as those for fisheries) commonly fail to capture these broader contributions to livelihoods, nor do they consider women's engagement in fishery/shellfish harvesting activities

Employment in the fisheries sector

According to *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture* published in 2016 by FAO, "in the period 2005–2014, the quality and frequency of reporting on engagement by gender improved slowly. It is estimated that, overall, women accounted for more than 19 percent of all people directly engaged in the fisheries and aquaculture primary sector in 2014. A recent publication estimates that, globally, when primary and secondary fisheries sector engagements are combined, women make up half of the workforce. As reporting improves and policies directed at increasing women's decision-making capacities in the sector develop, it is expected that both reporting and actual engagement of women in the sector will increase." FAO estimates that, overall, fisheries and aquaculture assure the livelihoods of 10–12 percent of the world's population (FAO, 2014b).

(as the products are often not sold through a formal market system, may not be of high value, or may be used for home consumption). In addition, women may not self-report/identify as being “fishers” even though they are engaged in these activities.

In fisheries value chains men and women have distinct roles, and their socio-economic status influences their power relations. Women and men can have dominant roles, or they can be in positions of high dependency. Women constitute about half the population involved in fisheries development activities. In some developing regions women have become important fish entrepreneurs who control significant amounts of money, finance a variety of fish-based enterprises, and generate substantial returns for households and communities.

Worldwide, the fisheries and aquaculture sector provides direct employment and revenue to an estimated 180 million or more people.

In certain countries of West Africa (i.e. Ghana, the Niger, Benin and the Gambia), women are traditionally engaged in low-paid jobs, such as unloading the day’s catch to be carried to the beach or fish-smoking huts; drying and processing the fish; and converting fish waste into useful products.

Compared with men, women often face more problems related to technology, finance for enterprise expansion, and transport. Their plight is worsened at the market level where they encounter price fluctuations for their products, or where social and/or cultural pressures limit their market opportunities to locations that are close to home. If women are able to access local markets, they may still be unable to access the national or global markets that men have access to. They often assume responsibility for their families’ daily subsistence needs, which sometimes drastically depletes their working capital.

In the inland fisheries of many countries women are engaged in fishing and are taking a leading role in the rapid growth of aquaculture. They own and manage fishing boats and have their own fishing gear.



▲ Selling fish at the market in Lisbon, Portugal.

In aquaculture, women often carry out most of the work of feeding, harvesting and processing fish and shellfish. They can become managers of small household enterprises, such as fish ponds, and thus improve their families’ income and nutrition. However, women tend to have limited control over ponds and inputs for aquaculture, so they rarely participate in production beyond satisfying their household needs. When aquaculture production intensifies, it increases the labour burdens on women and youth, affecting their production, productivity and welfare.

As most fisheries activities are seasonal and influenced by the status of the resources, many fishing communities have diversified their livelihoods. Depending on the status of their household, women and men engage in other economic activities such as vegetable gardening or farming to augment their family incomes, as is seen in Benin, Cambodia, the Congo, Ghana, Nigeria and Thailand.

Women mayors of villages in the Philippines

In the coastal areas of the Philippines, people have distinct gender roles similar to those in many African and Asian countries. For example, in Batan Bay, women are prohibited from stepping onto fishing boats, which limits their access to fisheries. Women onshore, however, have access to fisheries and are even given high positions. The *Barangay*, or fishing villages, have both men and women mayors. The village associations consist of many women who participate in decision-making. This situation explains why the Philippines has the lowest gender-gap score in Asia, according to a 2013 report from the World Economic Forum.

Considering children in gender approaches to ensure nutrition and education

A five-year GEF-FAO Western Africa project under the Coastal Fisheries Initiative was carried out in coastal fisheries communities of Cabo Verde, Côte d’Ivoire and Senegal, making special efforts to integrate women’s fisherfolk organizations. Although men are primarily engaged in fishing and mending the boats and nets, it is women who put in long hours once the fish is landed and brought to shore. In Côte d’Ivoire, women’s fisherfolk associations have set up day care centres to lessen the burden of child care for mothers of young children while they are cleaning, smoking and selling the fish. These centres are also available for school-age children, who receive a nutritious meal and stay to do their homework while their mothers are at work. The associations also provide social assistance to many women undertaking a wide range of tasks to support their fishing households, in addition to more targeted entrepreneurial training for these women.

Impact of climate change and natural disasters

The degradation of coastal marine resources (i.e. reduced fish stock and lagoon contamination) and decreased soil fertility affect the livelihood systems of men and women. Coastal areas are highly vulnerable to natural disasters caused by climate change; this can force local people to migrate to zones with more productive potential, which can create conflicts. Due to asymmetries in social structures, women are often the most affected by these conflicts. In this context, it is necessary to invest in women's networks, as they can play important roles in mobilizing and redistributing resources, promoting labour opportunities, providing information, and in creating new coping strategies for households and communities.

When faced with dwindling fisheries resources (seasonal or otherwise), migration is often the coping response of men. It can have positive

impacts on household income, as men's remittances can reduce pressure on resources and offer new opportunities to exchange technology and expertise. Yet migration is also often linked with an increased risk of HIV/AIDS, which can have negative implications on household vulnerability.

For sedentary communities, when an evolution in water temperature and other ocean conditions causes changes in catch potential, women are also the most impacted by climate change effects. Any redistribution of fish species requires changes in technology for fish harvesting, processing and marketing, which must be made available to both men and women processors, especially those working at small-scale levels and living in the poorest areas.

Until the 1980s, most investment in the fisheries sector was directed at large-scale and industrial production, particularly in coastal fisheries. Limited funds were allocated to small-scale fisheries, with little attention given to social issues. As fish stocks declined, development efforts focused on increasing investment in aquaculture, making changes in the trade system, and developing innovative institutional arrangements for fisheries management, with a new focus on social issues in fisheries. Poverty reduction, gender equality and livelihood approaches entered the sector's development agenda and began to influence fisheries planning.

Almost universally, women play key roles in the fishery industry and in household livelihoods and nutrition. These women, estimated at approximately 90 million, are often invisible to policy-makers who have traditionally assumed – mistakenly – that fisheries are largely a male domain. Many studies indicate that millions of rural men and women engage in subsistence fishing on a seasonal or occasional basis, especially in inland fisheries in Asia and Africa, but are not recorded as

“fishers” in official statistics due to engagement in other activities, which may be more economically productive, or a reluctance to self-report as fishers.

The fisheries sector is mainly documented through statistics on capture and aquaculture, where the quality of sex-disaggregated data has been low and the reporting frequency variable. Policies and development plans obscure the economic contribution of the pre- and post-harvest subsectors, where women are most active. In addition, reported statistics largely fail to capture youth and children employed in the sector, and the limited data available are rarely sex-disaggregated. Gender issues in the fisheries sector are seldom examined, and women's important role is often not adequately considered.

By failing to address gender-specific constraints on improving production and productivity, policies have often resulted in massive losses to the sector in terms of production and income, household food security and nutrition, particularly for the poor.



©FAO/K. Pratt

▲ Women being taken out into the pond by boat to feed cassava chips to fish in Ghana.



©FAO/Giulio Napolitano

▲ Displaced women on the banks of aquaculture pond in Democratic Republic of Congo restoring household food production capacity.

How can we promote gender equality and empower women in the fisheries sector?

Both women and men must be accorded equal rights and be able to participate in the development process, in order to ensure that their interests and needs are adequately protected and fulfilled. International human rights law recognizes equal rights, yet women remain marginalized, while their workloads and responsibilities have increased.

In view of their important role in the post-harvest subsector, women must be allowed to participate in decision-making processes, and be provided with the access to physical and capital resources for developing their industry and meeting their needs and aspirations. It is necessary to provide them with training and formal education to improve the efficiency, profitability and sustainability of their activities; to ensure adequate infrastructure, equipment, technologies, and access to markets. This will support their enterprises, increase their income potential and reduce their marginalization. However, there is always the risk of elite capture (by men) of new income-generating opportunities for women. For example, as seen in the development of the mussel culture industry in India (which was once traditionally carried out by women), once the activity became profitable men began to engage in culturing as well, and women were driven out of the industry (Ramchandran 2011).



©FAO/Alessandra Benedetti

▲ Endorsement of the principle for responsible agricultural investments to address food insecurity in protracted crises.

It is also urgent to give women equal control in the value chain and profit margins. This is particularly relevant as women often still work in low-status, less-skilled and low-paid jobs, and on informal, casual and temporary contracts that disqualify them from receiving social benefits. A study on women clam collectors in Tunisia has shown that they earn very little due to their weak bargaining power within a larger system characterized by intermediaries, unfair transport fees, lack of interest by officials and policy-makers, and limited access to training and extension. To overcome this, more efforts are needed to include women in the most profitable markets and enterprises, and to provide them with more employment opportunities in fish processing factories. In this way, they may profit from increasing market globalization and become less vulnerable to decreases in fish catches and poor services.

Women's rights in international instruments

The Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) represent the first internationally agreed instrument dedicated entirely to the small-scale fisheries sector. They state that “States should comply with their obligations under international human rights law and implement the relevant instruments to which they are party, including, inter alia, CEDAW, and should bear in mind the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action”. Women’s rights are emphasized in the SSF Guidelines in order to achieve gender equality in the context of small-scale fisheries. Chapter 8 (“Gender equality”) states that “gender mainstreaming should be an integral part of all small-scale fisheries development strategies” and that these strategies “require different approaches in different cultural contexts and should challenge practices that are discriminatory against women” (FAO, 2015a).

The picture is very complex, however, as the value chain is shaped by the interplay between male and female stakeholders’ complementary activities, which influence each other’s efficiency and the final value added. Men often have greater access and connections to national and even global value chains and greater bargaining power over intermediaries; while women sell fish at the retail level, mainly in local markets, where intermediaries tend to control the demand. To improve their positions in the value chain, female traders must be provided with the know-how and access to education and information on fish preservation and marketing so they can receive better quality fish and keep it fresh. The increasing globalization of markets has negative consequences (i.e. loss of income) for small fish traders, mostly women. For example, in Benin, the Gambia and Niger, women-owned enterprises are small and grow slowly, as funds are used to meet household expenses rather than to expand the business.

There is an urgent need to overcome socio-cultural norms and values, and political and economic factors that suppress or marginalize women’s rights, privileges and opportunities, so that they can participate more effectively and equally in the sustainable development of their communities.

The increasing demand for fish and fisheries resources is leading to overexploitation, and there is a need to better utilize present global catches while reducing waste and losses. Therefore fisheries strategies should take gender-specific divisions of labour into account. To avoid placing additional time burdens on women and to promote broad social and cultural acceptability, the opportunities offered by aquaculture should be assessed from a gender perspective, using a participatory approach. Strategies must ensure that aquaculture can contribute to women’s empowerment. To achieve a sustainable impact on the social and economic outcomes of communities, it is important that men and women equally benefit from any fishing project and from technical and financial inputs, such as boats, fridges, educational materials, technical instruments and credit.

According to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Sustainable Development Goal 5, “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”), the integration of a gender perspective into fisheries and aquaculture management and development also contributes to eradicating poverty and hunger, promoting gender equality, and empowering women. Gender-responsive interventions help meet these changes in policy, markets and technology.

Gender in fisheries policies, institutions and planning processes

Traditionally, institutions responsible for fishing resources have worked with and for men. Their policies have tended to concentrate on the harvesting sector, where men dominate. Fishing development programmes have focused on men’s needs and priorities, ignoring the different impacts of policies and programmes on each population category and paying little attention to the important role of women in the sector.

The situation is now changing as new institutional settings for participatory management evolve – although women are still often excluded from planning mainstream fisheries activities, and many countries still have gender-blind fisheries policies.

To ensure sustainable and equitable policy impacts it is essential to identify and target the needs and interests of both women and men. In the past, development policies in the small-scale fisheries sector targeted women as fish processors, providing them with inputs such as ovens and credit. But in policy-making, the implications of women’s social status (in relation to men) for achieving positive and sustainable change were not adequately examined, although the repercussions for the social and economic outcomes of such policies are significant.

Policy initiatives mainly support larger or urban traders rather than enabling those already working in the sector to take advantage of these changes. Additional efforts are needed to develop strategies that promote more diversified and independent roles for women – such as strengthened unions and organizations, resource allocation mechanisms and increased access to credit – and to formulate and implement fisheries policies and initiatives that adequately address women’s interests and priorities.

International commitment to women’s empowerment and gender mainstreaming in fisheries

In 1984, the World Conference on Fisheries Management and Development adopted a strategy for fisheries development that incorporated participatory and integrated approaches. The strategy recognized women’s prominent role in production, processing and marketing in artisanal fisheries, and promoted their inclusion in all development programmes by taking specific measures to address gender issues and women’s empowerment.

Gender integration in coastal resource planning in Mexico

Mexico has adopted an affirmative gender policy for government functions in fisheries, with women attaining ministerial positions to assist the sector’s development. Participatory approaches for managing coastal areas were used to improve people’s livelihoods and protect the environment. Research on social and ecological systems focused on the division of labour and responsibilities between men and women; property rights, access to credit and resources in coastal states; resource management institutions; and ways to support the most vulnerable groups without jeopardizing resources.

This requires overcoming the weak political commitment to mainstreaming gender into the development agenda by supporting and monitoring equity, promoting women’s empowerment, and providing adequate information and evidence for proper decision-making and policy-making. Women must also be adequately represented in fisheries sector decision-making fora and in leadership positions.

Men and women should enjoy equal opportunities in decision-making processes and in non-traditional activities and organizations. Research frequently focuses on capture, but must also adequately consider other fish users involved in pre- and post-fishing operations. It is essential to consider the livelihood interests of all stakeholders throughout the value chain when addressing resource management. New institutional arrangements are needed for the equal participation of capture and post-harvest actors in decision-making. Protection measures and gender-specific budget allocations are also necessary to promote women’s capabilities, empowerment and social advancement in fisheries and aquaculture. Categories of male actors who are equally disadvantaged by power relations in the sector should also be targeted.



▲ Getting back to work after hurricane Ivan in Grenada.

©FAO/Giuseppe Bizzari



©FAO/Giulio Napolitano

▲ Women of fisherfolk village in Bangladesh repairing fishing nets.

Gender in fisheries industries (technology, fish utilization and marketing)

In Latin America, about 95 percent of fisheries are industrial, and a large proportion of products are processed and packaged in factories. Studies of factory employment in this region reveal that men and women receive equal payment for the same tasks, but women occupy very few of the higher-paid positions. Most of their work involves receiving, cleaning, filleting, classifying and packing the fish. In resource management, the

Fish smoking in West Africa

Women in West Africa specialize in smoking bonga, catfish, sharks, skates and rays for immediate consumption in urban areas. Their operations are labour-intensive and characterized by small-scale marketing and low profit margins. Apart from people operating in community fisheries centres, smoking facilities and techniques are generally poor and do not receive assistance for improvement. The age of women smoking fish ranges from 16 to over 50 years old. The high density of smoke emitted poses a health risk, and indeed many women do not encourage their daughters to take up fish smoking as a profession. To overcome this problem, a new fish-smoking technology, the FTT-Thiaroye (or the FAO-Thiaroye fish processing technique) has been introduced in many African countries and some Asian countries. This technology is known for its efficient control of smoke and contaminants produced during the smoking process. The FTT-Thiaroye also reduces the amount of fuel needed, and provides five times more load capacity than traditional barrel ovens or even improved ovens like the Chorkor, Banda or Altona. In terms of food safety, the FTT-Thiaroye helps fish processors meet the highest international safety and quality standards, and therefore enables them to access broader and more remunerative markets.

Statistics and gender profiles

The information available to decision-makers is still limited, and research and statistics are seldom disaggregated by sex; what's more, these focus on the male-dominated fish catching sector rather than fish processing and marketing, where women are more active.

To overcome this constraint, gender (and poverty) profiles are required to assess the gender implications of changes in the fisheries and aquaculture sector. Detailed intra-household information is needed to analyse the different impacts, risks and gains on men's and women's livelihoods. The complex relationships at household and community levels between men and women as boat owners, processors and sellers, and their access to productive resources and decision-making mechanisms, must be adequately analysed so that appropriate actions can be taken to reduce the vulnerability of the most affected population categories.

Sex-disaggregated statistics in fisheries

Women's contributions in fisheries and aquaculture are often invisible, due to the fact that many national accounting systems and statistical surveys collect data from heads of households, who are assumed to be men. In addition, "fisheries" are often equated with "fishing", where men predominate. Since 1995, FAO has been collecting primary employment data according to gender, but it often has to estimate these figures, owing to member countries' lack of gender-specific reporting.



©FAO/CESPA Mali

▲ Women from cooperative smoking fish on new chorkhor oven in Mali.

Training in marketing research and quality assurance for high-quality fish products in Latin America

Outside the main cities of Colombia, the consumption of fish and fish products is low, owing to insufficient supply and the high cost of fish compared with other sources of animal protein. To help address this issue, a project was implemented to assist indigenous communities, composed of mainly women and young male fishers, by providing participatory training in marketing, finances, quality control and enterprise planning. As a result, the communities drafted a business plan for a high-value commercial fish enterprise. Similar training for fish processors has been provided in Honduras and Mexico.

livelihood interests of all stakeholders involved throughout the whole value chain should be considered.

Studies carried out in Bangladesh, Kenya, Sri Lanka and in some Latin American countries show that women participating in the growing seafood export processing industry, where they are required to stay away from home for long periods, face difficulties in developing other aspects of their lives. They often experience poorer working conditions and lower wages than men. Women are given irregular and short-term work, frequently with no health, safety or other protection benefits. Adopting a gender lens in the formulation of industrial fisheries policy would allow these underlying gender inequalities to be addressed.

The bulk purchasing of fish, the opening up of new markets for fishmeal and fish oil, and the growth of large wholesale trade are increasing the competition between local fish traders and external buyers. This often has negative social impacts on local fishing communities, where minimal access to capital, inputs, supplies and advisory services constrains



▲ Workers in a deputation and exportation centre separating clam varieties in Tunisia.



▲ Women packing oysters from Oualidia Lagoon into crates in Morocco.

their ability to establish and maintain a reliable supply of high-quality produce, creating difficulties for entry into international markets.

Women's poor access to resources in fisheries can also increase their vulnerability in terms of health. Some studies in sub-Saharan Africa report rises in the incidence of HIV/AIDS for a number of reasons, including fish-for-sex practices between male fishers and local female buyers seeking access to fish. This is linked to the increased competition for fish and the resulting new power relations between existing players.

Women's participation as equal and productive partners in fisheries has significant impacts on household nutrition and living standards. Fisheries and aquaculture projects must analyse all these socio-economic factors, along with the existing relationships, and recommend actions aimed at gender equality and increasing women's participation as active agents for change in the sector.

The Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute has provided women traders with mobile phones for fish marketing so they can negotiate with brokers. While in many European countries, women have attained positions at the policy level, and are promoting important legal innovations that recognize their role in productive activities related to fisheries.

Lessons learned

A series of fisheries studies have identified the following opportunities to address gender equality and women's empowerment in fisheries and aquaculture:

- Focus on ongoing changes in livelihoods at community, household and individual levels, and analyze emerging gender issues.
- Investigate specific changes taking place throughout the aquaculture, artisanal and industrial fisheries value chain.
- Begin by analyzing the gender roles and then move on to gender relations, evaluating what local women and men can achieve and do with their resources, rather than what resources they do or do not have.
- Formulate gender-sensitive indicators (i.e. affirmative action policies such as fixed quotas and reserved fishing areas for women – a qualitative indicator in the area of policy and institutional arrangements).
- Collect and disseminate sex-disaggregated statistics for capture and post-harvest fisheries, and calculate how these activities contribute to the national economy, in order to improve the visibility of pre- and post-harvest actors.
- Combine poverty profiling and gender analysis to tackle the underlying causes of vulnerability and evaluate intervention strategies.
- Select product marketing opportunities based on the capabilities of different stakeholders.
- Provide more incentives and boost investment for improved technologies in the field of fish processing, where up to 90 percent of workers are women.
- Build on the international community's growing interest in valuing and promoting women's work, and the political will of many countries to promote women's welfare in rural areas; and investing in the dynamism of women themselves.



▲ Local women attending a meeting to rehabilitate small-scale fisheries after tsunami in Indonesia.

FAO Sustainable Fisheries Livelihoods Programme (SFLP)

This programme adopts a holistic approach to gender analysis, focusing on the gender relations throughout the fish supply chain in 25 West and Central African countries. Studies were conducted to identify livelihood diversification strategies for specific categories of men and women; analyse the resource allocation among household members; and assess their ability to fulfil their responsibilities and use available opportunities. Policies and practices detrimental to women's status were also identified. Formal and informal frameworks in different economic, social, cultural and institutional contexts were assessed to determine priorities for change and to influence policy issues, institutional environments and processes.

SFLP incorporates local gender action planning in its mainstreaming strategy (a bottom-up approach). It recognizes that sustainable change requires a framework for action, spanning organizations and institutions at field, intermediate and macro levels (top-down mainstreaming), in order to mobilize women's organizations and groups to promote gender equality. This can play a critical role in advocating for policy support and making others accountable for empowering women.

Safety at sea for small-scale fisheries in Africa and Asia

FAO has implemented a Global Safety at Sea Programme for West Africa and South Asia to improve the livelihoods of small-scale fishing communities by decreasing the number and effects of accidents at sea. The programme follows the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries principles and guidelines in addition to SFLP participatory approaches. Gender and HIV/AIDS issues are mainstreamed into the programme to ensure that men and women can benefit equally, and to raise awareness about the risks of HIV transmission in fisheries-based livelihood systems. Fishing communities in developing countries often suffer HIV prevalence rates that are five to ten times higher than those of the general population. Women's rates are often even higher, owing to their subordinated economic and social position.

Fieldwork suggests that meso level organizations that guide co-management processes can play an important role in advocating for gender-responsive regulatory systems that contribute to gender equality.

Several country-level initiatives have been undertaken by institutions to promote gender equality at a national level. The Vietnamese Women in Fisheries Network and the Committee for the Advancement of Women in Fisheries have set up a gender database and developed a gender action plan for empowering women through capacity development. The goal is to make them equal partners with men in the political, cultural and social life of Viet Nam. Thailand's National Women in Fisheries

©FAO/D. Adiek Berry

How to integrate gender analysis in fisheries projects

- Identify the specific needs and priorities of women and men beneficiaries.
- Analyse legislation and customary laws affecting men and women, and their access to resources and services.
- Assess the gender division of tasks in the target groups between productive, reproductive and community activities.
- Present quantitative and qualitative data on decision-making processes and participation of women and men.
- Analyse specific project initiatives and activities aimed at assisting the most vulnerable groups of men, women, boys and girls.
- Monitor and evaluate the project's impacts on men and women.
- Assess and strengthen the capacity of existing/potential organizations to promote equal opportunities and rights for women.



©FAO/Nicole Franz

▲ Women fish traders in Nagapattinam, India.

Examples of gender-sensitive indicators in the sustainable management of marine resources

- Percentage of men and women participating in fishing activities.
- Data on non-remunerated work carried out by women in fish processing and marketing.
- Number of men and women with access to marketing techniques and with accounting skills.
- Number of men and women with their own sources of income.
- Number of men and women who have received credit.
- Number of men and women, boys and girls involved in non-traditional occupations.
- Number of women involved in production activities.
- Increase in the percentage of women's organizations with judicial status.
- Number of men and women in fishing community-based organizations.
- Number of men and women with ownership of land and other productive resources.
- Number of men and women, boys and girls involved in the conservation of natural resources.
- Number of women participating in decision-making bodies in fishing communities.
- Perceptions and opinions of women on their level of participation in fishing activities and decision-making.
- Views of men and women on the benefits received from the projects.

Network recognizes women's important role in fisheries management and production. In Chad, clusters have been established to manage community technology platforms for improving fish preservation and processing and reducing the negative outcomes of globalization on small-scale fisheries and aquaculture.

During the formulation of development projects and programmes for coastal zones, analysing gender issues to assess the impacts of any activity on the relationships between men and women at household and community levels contributes to promoting gender equality and sustainable development.

Quantitative and qualitative gender-sensitive indicators can be formulated and monitored within the fishing communities, to see how well the projects satisfy the practical and strategic needs of men and women and what can be done to reduce existing gender gaps.

The way forward

Human dimensions must be considered in all formal fisheries regulations, policies and plans, and the gender perspective must be included in fisheries activities and development strategies. This requires proper organization and involvement of women and men in identifying their needs and aspirations and in searching for solutions. As in other sectors, women's empowerment in fisheries requires an examination of their means of production, gender relationships, and how to create equalities in their access to resources, services and employment opportunities.

New institutional arrangements are being created as climate change, resource depletion, aquaculture development and global trade shape and re-shape the fisheries sector. These must ensure new opportunities for equitable resource access rights, access to markets, benefits from aquaculture and codes of conduct in the industry, especially for the most marginalized and poorest categories of men and women.

Future research is required to better understand women's and men's roles and relationships in the fisheries sector and to promote more sustainable and equitable fisheries development. Even after two decades of highlighting women's roles in fisheries, comprehensive and accurate sex-disaggregated statistics are lacking, and this gap must be filled as the first step in gender mainstreaming at the policy level. The following are efforts to be undertaken at the macro, meso and micro-levels to achieve gender equality in fisheries:

At the macro level

Legal frameworks

- Collect accurate sex-disaggregated statistics to inform policies and overcome the effects of gender-blind policies by analysing the gender relations and the livelihood strategies of men and women when planning fishing techniques and fish processing and when managing fisheries resources. Special efforts are needed at the policy level to ensure that women and men fishers have equal access to productive resources and services, and equal participation in research and planning activities. This also requires that adequate implementation mechanisms and budget allocation be in place to support good governance.
- Encourage the enactment of gender-responsive laws when necessary and according to Article 4 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which allows States Parties to adopt temporary special measures for as long as inequalities continue to exist and until equal status has been achieved.
- Promote and support the implementation of CEDAW Article 14, which requires states to take into account the specific problems faced by rural women and ensure that they participate in and fully benefit from agriculture and rural development.
- Implement CEDAW General Recommendation 34 on the rights of rural women, which calls for establishing enabling institutional, legal and policy frameworks to ensure that fisheries policies are gender-responsive and adequately budgeted.

Enabling environment

- Promote mutually beneficial partnerships between buyers (supermarkets) and small producers, and protect all partners involved (for example through insurance programmes to reduce risks).

Gender awareness

- Provide gender training, and sensitize policy- and decision-makers on gender issues.

Equitable access and control

- Ensure that women and men have access to know-how, information (especially for the aquaculture sector), productive resources, services and institutions.

Management initiatives

- Implement management strategies in the fishing areas used by women, such as mangroves, sand flats and lagoons, and assist them in identifying species and assessing how changes affect them.
- Provide incentives for companies to increase their sales and profits from ethical trade, and to promote corporate social responsibility. Community management and co-management groups (e.g. resource management groups) can provide a framework for livelihood improvements at community, household and individual levels and also for stakeholders' (women's) involvement.

At the meso/institutional level

Organizational support and networking

- Strengthen existing self-help groups and assist the formation and operation of support groups.
- Encourage women's participation in national and regional networks of community management practitioners, to promote the exchange of information and lessons learned and to give them a voice in changing the fisheries sector.
- Introduce incentives to support women's cooperatives, communal banks (for fish marketing), and gender-sensitive local institutions.

Social protection investments

- Design gender-sensitive social protection initiatives to address specific vulnerabilities, capacities and aspirations of both women and men.
- Support women's entry into new markets and profitable enterprises/businesses, through tailor-made and affordable financial services.
- Raise awareness about the dangers of fish-for-sex transactions and identify other sources of income for vulnerable women and men.
- Develop gender-responsive regulatory mechanisms for fishery factories to enhance the value of women's labour.
- Promote and extend coverage of social security measures to women fishworkers (see e.g. *Seguro Defeso* in Brazil).



©FAO/Nicole Franz

▲ Fish vendors in Nha Trang, Vietnam.

At the micro/community level (with cross-sectoral linkages)

Education

- Provide men and women with access to formal and informal education in improved technologies, bookkeeping, entrepreneurial skills, health practices, sanitation and nutrition, adult literacy, and training and extension services.
- Train women in the sustainable management of fishing resources (e.g. as guides in tourist areas) and in non-traditional female activities. Training could also cover topics such as gender-based violence and reproductive health.

Infrastructure improvements

- Introduce improved technologies, facilities and methods to ease women's work burdens and increase their efficiency, such as improved road and market infrastructure to shorten travel time and transaction periods, thus assisting them in the marketing and distribution of fishery products.

Income-generating opportunities

- Identify new income-generating opportunities in the communities, including non-fisheries activities, and provide technical and financial services for household, social and economic activities.
- Tailor new microfinance services and credit facilities to the needs of different clients, such as women who lack collateral and stable employment.
- Design projects to support women's work within their households (e.g. by providing water and wood supplies or labour-saving techniques) and to help the rural poor with no land rights (e.g. by providing ponds on government land).

Freeing up women's time

- Provide labour-saving technologies for domestic and fisheries work (i.e. ovens for fish processing, and more efficient processing and storage equipment); provide better infrastructure (electricity, refrigeration, running water, etc.) and services (transportation, health, extension, credit, child care arrangements at fish processing factories); and promote more equitable sharing of work between men and women, in order to free up women's time for taking advantage of new opportunities and for girls to attend school.

Decision-making bodies

- Provide social and communal support for women's participation in activities and decision-making processes aimed at community development.
- Invest in women's negotiation and leadership skills to build their self-esteem and self-confidence for participating in decision-making and negotiation processes.

Research and development

- Improve the gender balance in the fisheries sector by identifying and addressing gender-related needs in fisheries management.
- Document the traditional knowledge, institutions and skills of men and women in the sector, assessing customary management systems, fishing trends and seafood consumption patterns in rural coastal communities.
- Collect and disseminate sex-disaggregated data and develop gender-sensitive indicators for project implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- Create an inventory of targeted species and distribution patterns at the local level; analyse the main factors that affect fish abundance and distribution, and ways of addressing the specific problems faced by men and women.

Gender-responsive fishing projects and programmes

- Plan and implement gender-responsive projects that take into account the specific constraints faced by women and men, their productive and economic activities and education levels, and the sociocultural context.
- Let women participate in the formulation of management plans and activities designed for their empowerment.
- Encourage women's participation as project and extension staff, in recognition of their technical capacity.

References

1. **Aguilar, L. & Castañeda, I.**, 2001. *About fishermen, fisherwomen, oceans and tides: A gender perspective in marine-coastal zones*. International Union for Conservation of Nature (available at www.genderandenvironment.org).
2. **CEDAW**, 2016. General recommendation No. 34 on the rights of rural women.
3. **European Commission**, 2005. *Gender, fisheries and aquaculture: Social capital and knowledge for the transition towards sustainable use of aquatic ecosystems*, prepared by S.B. Williams, A.M. Hochet-Kibongui & C.E. Nauen. ACP-EU Fisheries Research Report No. 16. Brussels.
4. **FAO**, 1996a. *Gender issues in the fisheries sector and effective participation*. Paper prepared by I. Touray for Workshop on Gender Roles and Issues in Artisanal Fisheries in West Africa, Lomé, Togo, 11–13 December 1996.
5. **FAO**, 1996b. *Gender-sensitive measures in the fisheries sector*. Paper prepared by A.M. Jallow for Workshop on Gender Roles and Issues in Artisanal Fisheries in West Africa, Lomé, Togo, 11–13 December 1996.
6. **FAO**, 1996c. *Workshop on gender roles and issues in artisanal fisheries in West Africa*. Lomé, Togo, 11–13 December 1996. Cotonou, Benin (available at fao.org/docrep/x0205e/x0205e00.htm).
7. **FAO**, 1998. *Gender and fisheries*. Gender and Food Security (available at <http://193.43.36.103/Gender/en/fish-e.htm>).
8. **FAO**, 2003. *Gender – Key to sustainability and food security. Plan of Action Gender and Development* (available at www.fao.org/News/1997/introG-e.htm).
9. **FAO**, 2004. *Sustainable Fisheries Livelihoods Programme (SFLP) in West Africa* (available at www.fao.org/fi/website/FIRetrieveAction.do.dom).



©FAO/J. Villanora

▲ A fisherman helps a woman carry a basket full of fish in the Philippines.

10. **FAO**, 2007. *Gender policies for responsible fisheries – Policies to support gender equity and livelihoods in small-scale fisheries*. New Directions in Fisheries Policy Briefs on Development Issues, No. 6. Rome.
11. **FAO**, 2013. *CEDAW – Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. A tool for gender-sensitive agriculture and rural development policy and programme formulation*. Guidelines for Ministries of Agriculture and FAO.
12. **FAO**, 2014a. *A decisive impact in natural resource sustainability: Key gender considerations in post-harvest fisheries*, by Y. Diei-Ouadi, K. Holvoet & A. Randrianantoandro. *Nature & Faune*, Volume 29, Issue 1.
13. **FAO**, 2014b. *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture* (available at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3720e/index.html>).
14. **FAO**, 2015a. *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication* (available at <http://www.fao.org/fishery/ssf/guidelines/en>).
15. **FAO**, 2015b. *Running out of time. The reduction of women's work burden in agricultural production*.
16. **FAO, IFAD & World Bank**, 2008. *Module 13: Gender in fisheries and aquaculture*. Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook. Rome.
17. **Gender and Water Alliance**, 2006. 3.9 Gender and Fisheries, updated 18 December 2006 (available at www.genderandwater.org/page/2821).
18. **Ramchandran C.**, 2011. *A Sea of One's Own*. Yemaya Issue No. 38 November 2011.



©FAO/Antonello Prota

▲ Women transporting fresh fish in their ice boxes in Burkina Faso.