



WWF

BRIEFING

UK

2012



Social Development

FISHERIES MANAGEMENT & GENDER

SUMMARY

This briefing note is one of a series, produced by WWF-UK, to help develop understanding and awareness around the importance of gender analysis in natural resource management programmes.

The briefings, include summaries from case studies around the world, looking at lessons and experiences from integrating gender perspectives to a lesser or greater extent in programmes. The format is deliberately succinct and not too technical to enable the reader to access an initial understanding of natural resource-gender dynamics.

Other briefings in the series can be found here:
wwf.org.uk/what_we_do/making_the_links/women_and_conservation

Comments should be directed to Clare Crawford at CCrawford@wwf.org.uk

It has become clear that the challenges women face in fishing and fisheries needs to be addressed at various levels. There's a need to challenge unequal gender relations within and outside the household, and within organisations. There's also a need to seek recognition for the paid and unpaid labour of women that goes towards sustaining fisheries and fishing communities, and to ensure that women's roles in the fisheries sector don't remain 'invisible'. Women also need to have an increased right to participate in decision-making processes with respect to fisheries planning and management.

Addressing gender inequities by improving women's incomes and educational levels, as well as their access to information and decision-making processes, will enhance women's capabilities and ability to contribute to fishing and fisheries with clear benefits on a number of levels for households, as well as society in general.

BACKGROUND

The majority of fishers and fish farmers are poor, small-scale fishers. Their poverty encompasses more than just income: it includes lack of land ownership, high degrees of indebtedness, poor access to health, education and financial capital, and political and geographical marginalisation. It is women who are often most vulnerable and bear the brunt of these constraints and challenges.

Fishing is often seen as a male activity, especially where this involves boats, equipment and long absences at sea. But women also play key

roles in maintaining equipment, processing and marketing of the fish. And they often fish, too. However, women's roles are often less acknowledged.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN FISHERIES

According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation women made up 12% of people working in capture fishing or fisheries in 2008. This has been steadily increasing with a 167% increase over the past two decades. Women also play a critical and significant role in small-scale fisheries. In 2010, they represented almost half the people working in small-scale fisheries with even greater numbers working in inland fisheries according to the FAO. They perform many of the pre-harvesting and most of the post-harvesting tasks. However, since these tasks are not always recognised, data are not usually gathered and women's labour remains largely invisible. For example, the activity of gleaning for mollusks is almost invisible in most fisheries statistics and is an activity in which women make up a large portion of the labour. Women also perform many unpaid pre- and post-harvesting tasks (mending nets, collecting bait, preparing food for fishers, keeping accounts), which are unacknowledged or undercounted as employment.

However, research has revealed the astounding amount of work that women do in the fisheries sector.

In fishing communities the household often functions as an economic unit where the roles of both men and women tend to be complementary: women control land-based activities, such as net-weaving, processing and marketing fish, while men engage in fish harvesting. At the same time, women remain responsible for sustaining the fishing household, and maintaining community networks and support structures. The diverse array of women's roles in the fishery sector, as well as their activities within the home, make them important contributors to both national and household food security. However, the recognition of women's contributions is not equal to that afforded to men.

THE MAIN PROBLEMS FACED BY WOMEN

Women from fisher households are involved in fish processing, aquaculture, small-scale fishing and fish selling, but less often in commercial fishing using bigger vessels. The main problems faced by fisher women are:

- They're confined to less visible roles. Although women are and have always been present in the fishing industry, in most instances their participation is neither socially acknowledged nor economically remunerated. This is primarily due to the fact that the stages at which they become involved aren't the most visible ones, both within and outside the community.



© Jürgen Freund / WWF-Canon

- Women often have no control over income earned from fisheries' activities.
- Women lack opportunities to hold managerial and decision-making posts. The main obstacles appear to be a lack of confidence in their abilities to hold such positions, as well as finding sufficient time to do so.
- There are high numbers of male (possibly seasonal) migrants – either moving away from fishing grounds leaving an increased workload for women, or moving into fishing grounds where they compete with women for scarce resources. For example, if a project goes well there may be an influx of male migrants, which may limit the resulting benefits for women.

GENDER ROLES AND FISHERIES

Despite women's significant role in fisheries, there's a lack of attention to gender roles. This can result in policies or programmes failing to improve livelihoods or reduce vulnerability among fishing communities. Addressing the largely 'invisible' role of women in small-scale fisheries will increase the chances that actions aimed at improving the livelihoods of small-scale fishers and their families are successful. Fishing households often have clearly defined gender roles and responsibilities. This results in different income streams within households. Women who buy fish for processing and marketing may have to compete with others to obtain fish, even from their male relatives. These complex arrangements and gender relations need to be considered when planning development interventions. Doing so can avoid women being further marginalised and avoid creating an environment that makes the women more vulnerable.

Rural women play a critical but often undervalued role in fishing-reliant families and communities. Their direct activities include collecting, processing, preparing and marketing of fish and other marine resources. They also have an indirect influence through household management in accounting for how many fish are supplied to the household. Pivotaly, women also have the main responsibility for educating young children about food collection, preparation and management. This extends to passing on their knowledge on resource use and traditional management.

While women may bear the brunt of the costs of gender differences and inequality within society, the impact of this is felt widely. Women are the main family caregivers, so negative impacts on them will result in persistent poverty for all members of the society.

WHY ARE GENDER ISSUES IN FISHERIES IMPORTANT?

There are good reasons why effective and efficient development of fisheries must take the roles of both women and men in the sector



into account, including the obvious concerns about fairness, equal opportunity and discrimination:

- Women make up an important part of the fishing sector, particularly in small-scale fisheries, and increasingly in capture fishing and other activities. By acknowledging the role they play, better management and development strategies and interventions can be developed that address all of the activities in the sector, not just those carried out by men.
- Women make significant contributions to fishery-related activities other than fishing. They play the major role in processing fish and fishery products, as well as in marketing. Although these roles are often very different to those of men, they are integral parts of the industry. Ignoring these activities means ignoring a large portion of the sector.
- The different work done by women generates different kinds of knowledge. For example, while men may know which grounds have the best fishing, women know the price these fish will fetch in the market. Only with an understanding of both women's and men's experiences and expertise can we understand the fishery sector in its entirety, and manage its development appropriately.
- The under-representation of women in decision-making limits the use of their expertise and knowledge.
- The number of women holding managerial posts with decision-making powers is very low. Many women in fisheries have low self-esteem, possibly reflecting social values in those settings that hold men to be superior. This reduces women's involvement and limits the ability for women to be empowered and contribute to the fullest of their capacity.
- Women don't usually participate in meetings held by fishermen's organisations. Most fishing projects are male-oriented, and women's participation is limited with respect to planning, programming and management. As a result, consideration of women's knowledge and needs is limited, which ultimately limits the effectiveness of such plans and programmes, etc.
- There are very few policies or programmes within the fishing sector where gender aspects are considered, resulting in excluding a significant portion of the fishing community from programmes development and assistance and equal opportunities.



© Brent Stirton / Getty Images

RECOMMENDATIONS

Policies and programmes must meet the needs of women in the fisheries sector, recognise and value the role they play, and empower women at all decision-making levels. This could be achieved through:

- Increasing awareness of gender issues and ensuring that approaches improve the quality of life for women in fisheries.

Gathering information and developing research programmes that systematically tackle gender issues and women's participation and integration in fisheries development.

- Recognising the important role that women play in guaranteeing household food security and well-being.
- Developing marketing by providing further support in different areas such as improving women's access to markets and storage of fish. Although we must be aware that successful projects may increase male migration into an area, to the detriment of women fishers.
- Facilitating access to fish resources. Rights, access and control of resources are central to successful fisheries development. However, women's entitlements are frequently ignored. This situation must be addressed explicitly in order for the full potential of women's contributions to be realised. Women must also have a role in the management of resources.
- Encouraging the participation of women and women's groups in decision-making processes at both community level (by strengthening women's organisations) and government level.
- Providing appropriate training, designed to target women in fisheries. It's important to ensure that training is accessible to women so that they can improve their productivity and the quality of their products. Courses should be structured and held in places that won't conflict with women's other responsibilities.
- Implementing a 'gender and development' (GAD) approach rather than a 'women and development' (WAD) approach. A GAD approach focuses on the roles and socially constructed expectations of both women and men and encourages finding ways to challenge and change them. Women's producer groups and collective structures have succeeded in some interventions to access greater benefits for women and address gender inequities. But in other cases, projects that are mainly women-centred can be perceived by men as a threat, which can lead to the failure of the project. Programmes focused on increasing women's participation in fisheries management also often lacked an evaluation of their success.

SOURCES

Biswas, Nilanjana, 30 July 2011. Turning the tide: Women's lives in the fisheries and the assault of capital. Occasional Paper. Chennai, India, ICSF

ICSF, July 2010. Recasting the net – Defining a Gender Agenda for sustaining life and livelihood in Fishing Communities. Chennai, India

DFID, 1999. Fisheries Checklist – (from Siyanda Gender Mainstreaming Online Data Base)

DFID, 1999. Fisheries Core Text – (from Siyanda Gender Mainstreaming Online Data Base)

MC Arenas and A Lentisco, 2011. Mainstreaming Gender into project Cycle Management in the fisheries sector. FAO – Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific Bangkok.

Nireka Weeratunge and Katherine Snyder, April 2009. Gender Pathways Out of Poverty. Gleaner, fisher, trader, processor: understanding gendered employment in the fisheries and aquaculture sector. WorldFish Center, Malaysia/Malawi

The role of women in community management of fish resources and marine environments in cayar, Senegak

Introduction

Cayar is a fishing village about 50km north of Dakar. Cayar is one of the most important artisanal fishing communities in Senegal. During the last 20 years, pressure on marine resources has increased so significantly here that fish have become scarce. Although fishing is currently the most important economic sector in the country, many of the fish species are considered over-exploited.

This case study highlights the role of women in fisheries and coastal resource management in Cayar. Despite women's involvement in the use of coastal and marine resources around the world, many women face barriers to participating fully in the planning and management of those resources. Such barriers can be institutional, educational or cultural and can profoundly influence decision-making that affects the welfare of marine resources and coastal communities. This case study, of a WWF project, highlights efforts to involve women fully in fisheries and coastal resource management.

The project

The project had two phases.¹ The first initiative – 'Yakar, community management of marine resources and the environment' – aimed to conserve fishery resources, reduce poverty among the fishermen, and improve the hygiene of marine products. However, the project was more focused on conservation issues and didn't consider other issues. In time it was finally recognised that there was a need to take greater account of the link between natural livelihood resources and poverty alleviation and that the issues weren't simply conservation and biodiversity issues, but were closely linked to social, economic and political interests from the local to the national level.

It was also recognised that women play a crucial role in fisheries. Their main activities include:

- Processing fish products, and associated work such as collecting fresh water and fuel wood.
- An extensive involvement in buying and selling fish products – through local markets, restaurants or other outlets. As a result, the second programme – 'Safeguarding natural marine resources for coastal communities' – was initiated. Its overall objective was "to contribute significantly and demonstrably to the well-being of



© Meg Gawler / WWF-Canon

¹ A three-year programme jointly run by WWF, IUCN Netherlands and Friends of the Earth from 2004

natural marine resources and of the people that are directly dependent on those resources”. The main focus of the programme was poverty alleviation of small-scale fishers, the creation of market opportunities, and the strengthening of collaboration with civil society to build the capacity and performance of fisheries.

The project activities

Participation of women in establishing marine protected areas

In most countries, women aren't involved or are often overlooked in the planning, development or management of marine and coastal resources. Fortunately, the process of establishing a marine protected area (MPA) in Cayar recognised that gender and the participation of women in development processes is central for sustainable development.

Due to their different roles, women and men are affected differently by MPAs, regardless of whether or not they're consulted or involved. And both men and women inevitably have an impact on MPA implementation and management. Recognition of gender differences and their integration into MPA planning increases the chance of both women and men participating in and benefiting from an MPA, which in turn can contribute to its success.

When planners only consult men in resource management, they're consulting only half the population and are therefore missing a large portion of information available and specific issues that should be addressed for effective outcomes. In the case of Cayar, from the outset, women and men in the community were both involved in establishing the MPA. Women often have different knowledge and experience to share. They're able to contribute to a 'broader picture' and raise different issues and priorities from those of men.



© Simon de TREY-WHITE / WWF-UK

Setting up micro finance for women

The project encouraged fishers to adopt more environmentally-friendly gear and helped them and their families to switch from fishing to other employment. WWF has become active in helping to establish gender-sensitive community based micro-finance systems. Women have used micro-credit funds to start vegetable farming, livestock, shop keeping, and to add value to fish products by initiating their own wholesale fish businesses instead of selling to middlemen. In Cayar, micro-credit programmes were recognised as a potentially powerful tool to help communities near MPAs to expand and diversify their local economies, resulting in reducing poverty.

Lesson learned – what worked and why?

- A demand-driven approach was very effective. WWF's approach was to define, in collaboration with the communities, what needed

to be done. Setting up a micro-credit system was one of the community's requests. Women also expressed the need for new ovens for fish processing, and to be trained in financial management.

- In Cayar today, the local fishery organisations are well organised. Cayar is the only fishing village in Senegal with community management. The organisations have an economic component, and women have an important stake.
- From the beginning, WWF was conscious of the close links between poverty reduction and the exploitation of marine resources by fisher folk. WWF's intervention in Cayar developed an overlapping strategy to influence traditional practices within the fishers' community and address the gap between conservation and development needs of men and women in the community. For example, WWF established a cooperative credit scheme, the funds of which are used both in the fisheries sector (boats, outboard motors, gear) and outside it (horticulture, commerce). WWF has also helped development and maintenance of management structures and rules in artisanal fisheries and has helped construct ovens for women to process the fish.
- Another success was getting the communities to participate in the preparation and implementation of management plans. The women played an instrumental role in both the organisational planning and implementation of activities.
- Women's participation was limited to project activities (e.g. training and seminars, and livelihood project development). Although this created opportunities for women (e.g. access to resources, market access, and access to factors of production such as raw materials and additional capital), further understanding of this impact of involving women needs to be developed. Especially with regards to how women are able to participate in decision-making processes and resource management that ensure sustainable use, conservation and equitable benefits for men and women within the community.

Lessons learned – what didn't work and why?

Women's participation was limited to project activities (e.g. training and seminars, and livelihood project development). Although this created opportunities for women (e.g. access to resources, market access, and access to factors of production such as raw materials and additional capital), further understanding of the impact of involving women needs to be developed. A focus should be placed on how women are able to participate in decision-making processes and resource management that ensure sustainable use, conservation and equitable benefits for men and women within the community.

Recommendations

- Recognise that women have extensive knowledge about biodiversity, as they interact differently with the marine environment than men do. For example, their role in post-harvest activities such as gutting fish may give them greater knowledge about fish reproductive seasons.
- Ensure equitable participation in all activities, including training, of both stakeholders and staff – recognising that participation should never be mandatory. This may mean scheduling meetings that don't conflict with women's other obligations and take place in locations that are safe and accessible for women. In addition, there should be analysis of why women are unable to participate as much as men.
- Use participatory methods, such as single-sex focus groups and separate meetings for men and women, where women may be more open to discussions.
- Monitor how women and men participate in and benefit from coastal resource management.
- Keep sex-disaggregated data on all employment, training, enterprise group loans and meetings, in order to determine trends in the proportions of budgets spent on and participation of both genders.
- Create role models and encourage leadership and responsibility in promoting gender equality.

Source

Dr Arona Soumare, 18 December 2006. Role of Women in a Model of Community Management of Fish Resources and Marine Environments, Cayar, Senegal. WWF WAMER. Gender and Water Alliance

Women's participation in coastal conservation planning in Tanzania

Background

Experience demonstrates the advantages of involving local people in the planning, management and implementation of coastal resource planning. However, men often dominate participation and women's voices are sometimes not heard. This case study from northern Tanzania shows how women can be encouraged to participate in sustainable fisheries projects. It also illustrates some of the difficulties this can involve.

Introduction

In many coastal communities men typically make many if not most of the key natural resource decisions, despite the fact that women often carry out much of the work. However, if local communities are to be empowered to manage their natural resources with what's often only limited input from government, women must be involved as well as men.

Since 1994 the government of Tanzania has worked with IUCN -- the International Union for Conservation of Nature -- to establish an integrated coastal management programme in the Tanga region of Tanzania. The aim is to improve the capacity of government and community institutions to help local people use their near-shore fisheries, coral reefs and mangroves in sustainable ways -- including restoring degraded environments. The programme set out to identify and recognise the different roles, priorities, and responsibilities between women and men in the community, to improve greater equality between them, to improve access to resources, and to increase participation in decision-making and control over resources.

Both men and women play important but different roles. There are also differences in the control that both women and men can exert over these resources. Artisanal fishing is the main activity, especially for men. Women are involved in catching small shrimp from the shore. Farming is also important, especially rice farming by women. The growing of cash crops, primarily coconuts and cashew nuts, is mainly controlled by men.

Project activities

A wealth-ranking exercise conducted in three pilot villages showed that women were considered among the poorest people in coastal villages, because they own and control very few resources. The Tanga project aimed to address this gender inequality and promote a more equitable role for women in community life and sustainable development.

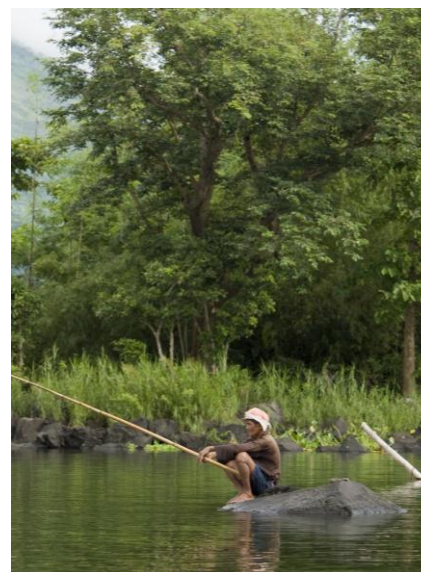


The first step was to work with both women and men to raise awareness of the need for both sexes to participate in decision-making, training and in study tours. Where the participation of women increased, women's confidence grew.

However, where women's participation continued to be low, special meetings were held to analyse the consequences and causes of their lack of participation. The women recognised that by not attending the meetings they wouldn't be able to benefit from programme activities. Reasons they gave for their absence included that men wouldn't listen to them, and also that meetings occurred at times that weren't suitable for them. They also complained that they weren't properly informed about the meetings. The men believed women didn't attend due to culture and tradition. A meeting was held to address this, and women decided to attend. The men agreed that they'd listen to the women, and that meetings would be held at more suitable times. They also agreed on how the meetings should be announced.

Results

- In the pilot villages environmental committees are, in general, gender balanced. Women have gained self-confidence, and some are even actively participating in typical 'male' activities like village patrols. Women and men's priorities are equally addressed. Some activities are male-dominated and others female-dominated, but there is mutual understanding and support.
- The participation of women was initially low (especially in one pilot village), but when women took part in the meetings they analysed the priority issues and solutions. They also took seats in the village management committees that were planning, overseeing and monitoring implementation of activities. And they participated in formulating a fisheries management agreement.
- The pilot village programme has, in general, had positive results. Illegal mangrove cutting and destructive fishing practices have declined, largely through the enforcement efforts of the villagers themselves. And there's a voluntary mangrove replanting and weeding programme. Many people, especially women, adopted seaweed farming and mariculture as alternative income generating activities. The villagers are now much more aware of coastal conservation concerns and they've started to learn the skills they need to protect and use their resources in a sustainable manner.



© Jürgen Freund / WWF-Canon

Lessons Learned

Addressing both gender and conservation issues can be complicated. Good role models are needed when trying to encourage gender equality. Female extension workers are essential to achieve a better understanding of the obstacles that women face; they can serve as role models for the women in the community. Where women have participated, they've gained self-confidence, participated in training courses, and are seeing the results of their activities. Thus, they've created role models among themselves.

- The project has drawn up a list of key objectives to help ensure gender equality. These include:
- Ensure that the project has a detailed understanding of the situation in which the community operates, including the differences in women and men's roles, priorities and resources.
- Involve women in project assessment, as extension workers, and in other teams.
- Use participatory approaches throughout.
- Use techniques to encourage women's participation, dialogue and co-operation.
- Ensure women and men are aware of the benefits of women's participation in all steps of the process, and the benefits of dialogue and co-operation between men and women.
- Collect and monitor gender-related data.
- Ensure equal representation in activities such as training courses, study tours and workshops.
- Ensure fair representation in village meetings and village committees.
- Conduct special meetings or other actions when participation of women is low or absent.
- Regularly assess gender equity in addressing priority issues, allocation of funds and materials, and other benefits, so that adjustments can be made when necessary.
- Inform women about their legal rights.

Sources

Trudi van Ingen and Claudia Kawau, April 1997. Involvement of Women in Planning and Management in Tanga Region, Tanzania. Tanga Coastal Zone Conservation and Development Programme, presented at a workshop on Participatory Natural Resource Management in Oxford, UK

WWF International and the Division for Sustainable Development in collaboration with Equilibrium Consultants, April 1999. The Role of Major Groups in Sustainable Oceans and Seas. A series of case studies. Background paper prepared for the Commission on Sustainable Development Seventh Session. New York, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Division for Sustainable Development & WWF

STAY TUNED FOR OUR NEXT NEWSLETTER

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please feel free to contact:

Clare Crawford at CCrawford@wwf.org.uk

