

**THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN FISHERIES ACTIVITIES
AN OVERVIEW**

**The institute for the Development of Small Scale Fisheries
Mozambique
1999**

**By Horácio Gervásio, idppe
Translation by Lino Guido, idppe**

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	2
1.1 Background	2
1.2. Justification	2
2. Purpose	3
3.Importance of the Work	3
4. Sources and Methodology	3
II CURRENT SITUATION.....	3
5.Undertaken studies	3
6. Ways of women participation in Fishery Activities	4
7. Major causes of Women's involvement in Fishery Activity	5
8.Constraints	6
III. PERSPECTIVES.....	7
9. Major lines of Intervention for Women's participation in fisheries	7
10. Geographical Areas and Priority Actions	8
IV.BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	9
V.BUDGET.....	10

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Background and Justification

1.1. Background

The history of women's participation in fisheries activities in Mozambique has been deeply influenced by the country's evolution process, particularly in the fisheries sector.

During the colonial period, there existed a strong attitude towards discouraging participation of native people in actions related to the country's promotion of socio-economic and cultural development. This policy was spread in all spheres (education, health, culture as well as activities related to economy) and it negatively affected women's integration in the country's socio-economical development process.

In 1975 Mozambique became independent. New policies and global strategies for development were adopted, among which promotion of women's emancipation and participation in the process of production. One of the most concrete examples of women's emancipation is the emergence of OMM (Organização da Mulher Moçambicana-Organization of Mozambican women) which constitutes up to date one of the principal centres of women's promotion.

In the fisheries sector, the first steps of socialization in the field were taken which brought people into fishermen cooperatives, centres of production whose main concern was to increase food supply to the rural areas. Cooperatives became a major incentive to people's involvement in production process and, though they were mainly made up of men, there was a considerable number of women as members. These cooperatives functioned with difficulties due to lack of management experience of this type of organisations, and this fact indirectly did affect negatively women's participation in activities of production.

Despite this situation, women still play a very significant role in development process of Small Scale Fisheries subsector. According to available information, in fisheries communities women participate not only in production (using fishing gears and proper facilities) but also in commercialization and distribution of fish product to the closer markets and to those far from fishing centres and from the coast.

1.2. Justification

Despite the above described situation, women continue playing a very important role in the process of developing the Small Scale Fisheries subsector. According to the available data, in fisheries communities, women participate not only in harvesting/ production (using own gears and means), but in distribution of fish product throughout nearing and far off markets.

Besides, preliminary remarks show that in most fishing communities of Mozambique women as the main family manager and most often with a degree of autonomy in decision making on the use of incomes. One of the reasons that explain this situation is the fact that men spend

most of their time on the sea thus, far from the families. This trend is particularly remarkable in areas where big crowds of migrating fishermen are gathered (men in general) to distant fishing centers and/or to cities or neighbouring countries in search of better livelihood.

2. Purpose

The chief aim of this work is to make an analytical revision of data regarding women's integration in fisheries activities, for a reflection on the ways of intervention for their promotion.

3. Importance of the Work

This work is of importance not only for the purpose of updating database (about women) in this institution, but and above all, it will play a significant role in the reflection about women in artisan fisheries subsector and consequently in defining an adequate methodology of institutional support (IDPPE) in terms of initiatives which integrate women in fisheries.

4. Sources and Methodology

In this work, written sources were used (studies done by IDPPE and other institutions). It is worthwhile referring that women's involvement in fisheries is still little known because of limited number of studies undertaken in this regard.

II. Current Situation

5. Undertaken Studies

IDPPE aims at producing studies and projects to support fishing communities of this country. Among target groups for these actions there are considered women who do fishing and trade fish product. The chief goal of these studies is to analyse and publish data related to approaches through which women involvement in fisheries activities is done, identifying at the same time, the guidelines for their promotion, support and development. The outstanding research aspects focused on the following factors:

- a) Factors which make women get involved in fisheries activities;*
- b) The structure and behaviour of women in the process of production and distribution of fish products;*
- c) The nature of existing relations between fishermen and women on one hand (intermediaries) and between women and consumers on the other hand.*
- d) Major constraints which women face in the process of production and commercialization of fish products.*

In reality, very little has been done in terms of research related to the issue of women in fisheries activities in Mozambique, in spite of the efforts developed over the years. One of the most important works about women in fisheries was a consultancy funded by NORAD done

by **M. Backgaard** in 1992¹. The consultancy was entitled "*The Role of women in fish production and commercialization in Cabo Delgado and Inhaca Island*" and it gives very important data concerning women's involvement and division of labour according to gender in fisheries activities. This study found out that both in Cabo Delgado (Ibo, Pangane) and Inhaca Island, there are fisherwomen who catch and commercialize bivalves and octopus as well as fish and they play a significant role in the development of small scale fisheries.

Some projects were identified through this study such as the collection and use of *holocturia* and octopus both at Inhaca and Ibo and suggested at the same time, the needed strategies for implementation.

Another work was done in 1993 by **V. Johnsen**. This study is entitled "*The Fishermen and Intermediaries in Mozambique*", and it refers mainly the central zone of the country (Sofala). This work shows the role of fisherwomen and traders of small shrimp (Tépuè) as well as other types of fish product (commercialization of dry fish into the hinterland) in that region of the country, identifying identifying at the same time material and economical constraints². One of of Johnsen's main recommendations was the need to carry out specific and more profound studies which may render it possible to identify actions and strategies for supporting this social group.

In 1996 another study was done (by **Horácio and F. Bukali**) which sought to identify and analyse the role of women in fish product commercialization in the southern region of Mozambique. The study refers that women constitute the main "*vehicle*" of fish product distribution and therefore, she stands at relevant place in the Small Scale Fisheries subsector. Among the recommendations that were made, the study highlighted the necessity to encourage emerging initiatives on research about gender issues in fishing communities and involve women in the present fisheries development and management policies, through specific programmes such as credit (using the existing groups of *xitique*³), training and others.

6. Ways of Women Participation in Fishery Activities

The produced studies as well as our own observations in the field point out the existence of two major ways of women participation in the fishery activity, namely:

- a) *As producers, and*
- b) *As processors/ traders*

Most producers (fisherwomen) are located in the north and centre and in some parts of southern Mozambique. As referred to before, at Ibo, Mocimboa da Praia, Pangane and Palma in Cabo Delgado province, women who do collection and selling of bivalves, octopus and

¹ In the former period it was mentioned about the role of women in fisheries activities in the area of Cabo Delgado in the study done by Rafael da Conceição (1990) and in an analytic text introduced by Abrão Pira-Bau on the role of women from Ibo in fisheries activities.

² Lack of fishing materials, transport, credit and other limitations

³ Xitique are small informal women groups who do rotary micro-credit and savings in own benefit. In fisheries greater part of xitiqueis made up of intermediary women (i.e. traders) and they are abundant in the south of the country.

other marines, did constitute until the beginning of the nineties, a source of fish products (marines) for domestic consumption, enabling men to sell most of it.

In Beira is pointed out to date women's fishing trading of small shrimp (tépue) and fresh fish. The same can be said of women crab haverssters in Vilankulos district in Inhambane province. In Nampula (in the districts of Moma, Angoche and Mussoril) there are also references of women who do fishing, however little is known of this social group and therefore we are unable to provide much details. Generally, they use knives, hammers or any other instrument to secure catching these resources closer to rocks. The following table gives some estimation of women haverssters/ producers in some coastal provinces of Mozambique.

Table nº1 : Number of women haverssters/producers registered by the census

Province	Year of registration	Nº of registered centers	Nº of registered fishermen	Nº of registered women
Cabo delgado	1995	139	3.854	4.532
Nampula	1994	116	2.048	4.331
Sofala	1990	42	206	100
Maputo	1995	7	450	2.183
Gaza	1994	9	9	20
Inhambane	1991	80	1844	3.002

Source: IDPPE, artisanal fisheries census, 1996.

The table above does not provide numbers of women traders/processors, nevertheless, they make up a wide group principally in the southern part of the country where they appear as the main intermediaries in the process of fish distribution. In this zone women sell their fish product both in the nearby markets and in places distant from their locations of origin, including neighbouring countries such as South Africa, Swaziland).

7. Major causes of women's involvement in fishery activity

In the studies that were carried out, the following were identified as major causes for women's involvement in fishery activity:

Economical Causes

a) Lack of employment opportunities for women, particularly in the coastal zones where there is no sufficient fertile land for a commercial agriculture and production infrastructure which can absorb local manpower;

b) Socio-economic changes due to introduction of the Economical Rehabilitation Programme in 1987 (PRE)⁴ With PRE there was a great reduction of the purchasing power in rural communities (coastal communities), thus increasing the cost of living, a fact which meant the need to diversify sources of income. In these circumstances, a lot of women in the coastal zone started to regard fishing as one of the most profitable alternatives.

Socio-political Causes

⁴ PRE introduced a process of economic and social readjustment which revived the private sector and reduced the financial participation of the State in the process of development (economic and social).

a) High degree of illiteracy (particularly in the rural areas) which limits women's possibility to get involved in activities outside fisheries, agriculture and informal business;

b) Historical migrations of men from villages into towns or from Mozambique to neighbouring countries⁵ in search of better employment opportunities, a fact which renders many women from (coastal communities) heads of families with a direct responsibility over the sustenance of their) During the civil war which ended in 1992, part of population of Mozambique took refuge in the coastal zone (or in islands), where fishing is the main economical activity.

8. Constraints

The main constraints which affect women producers and sellers can be summarized as follows:

a) Constraints of strategic and economical character

In Mozambique there are no actions or programmes aiming at promoting groups of communal interest (associations or community committees) to support specifically fisherwomen or intermediaries. At times there appear groups of fisherwomen or intermediaries who organize work in common and develop micro-credit (**Xitique** in the southern Mozambique), of informal character. They face difficulties due to lack of financial support from the State or Governmental Organizations as well as Non Governmental Organizations.

As a result, fisherwomen lack fishing material, infrastructure for conserving their catch and transport, for they do not have funds to acquire them. In Nova Sofala (Sofala province), in Ibo (Cabo Delgado province) and Inhambane (Inhambane province), women show the need to put their product in greater towns or other places where demand is relatively higher. However they are limited by lack of transport and financial resources to meet the expenses therefrom.

It is worth while stressing the limitations that the mozambican institutional body faces and renders it difficult the implementation of the recommendations of the above presented studies. IDPPE does not have on one hand, material and financial resources and on the other hand it lacks a qualified body of personnel or capacitated in gender issues. Hence the need to promote short term training programmes for IDPPE personnel directly involved in socio-economic matters (dDS).

b) Socio-cultural constraints

Along the coast, there is a general myth according to which "*fishing is a "male activity"*". For example, the *ronga* men from Costa do Sol (Maputo), *matsuas* from Inhambane and the Macuas/Chuabos from Zambezia come to grips in that "*women can not do fishing for this is a heavy task*".....and that "*their task is to take care of children, fields and small business while men take charge of activities related to fishing which are more demanding*"⁶

⁵ Principally from southern Mozambique to South Africa.

⁶ Interview of artisanal fishermen: Maputo, Inhambane, and Zambezia, 1995-1998.

This attitude is common and has a direct relation with cultural aspects and the type of social division of labour predominant in the Mozambican society, which excludes women from the fishing activity. However, despite the fact that prevailing the above pointed factors it is possible to witness a dynamical process involving this social group into activities related to fisheries, a fact which is being encouraged by the socio-economical trends in the country, where by women appear to be active members of the family, actively participating in resource management and in decision making process.

III. Perspectives

9. Major guidelines of intervention for women's promotion in fisheries

IDPPE's technical and financial limitations render such an intervention limited. However, in the approach of the present plan, this institution foresees to materialize the following actions:

a) Continuation of socio-economic researches (women's behaviour and organisation, gender issues, social integration, community and family) in order to identify actions accessible to programmes or projects in support to women and respective presentation to entities capable of funding.

b) Promotion of biological and technological studies in order to analyse the type of species accessible to women fishers and the fishing gears used for its exploitation as well as conservation ways used in the main fishing centers.

c) Promotion of specific studies on commercialization in order to identify the venue, and quantity of fish product sold by women.

d) Propose to entities that can fund training programmes (through workshops, seminars, speeches, etc) to capacitate IDPPE technicians and extensionists in issues related to analysis, monitoring and appraisal of aspects related to gender issues) and of fisherwomen (in matters related to organisation, management, micro-credits and others):

e) Promote community groups of interest (associations) made up by women in order to attract investment.

f) Elaborate projects of support in informal credits and other intervention lines, particularly in the southern region of Mozambique.

2. Geographical areas and priority actions

Geographical area	planned action
<p>Province: Cabo Delgado</p> <p>District: Ibo, Mocimboa da Praia, Palma and Pangane</p> <p>Target group: women gatherers/fishers and sellers of shellfish and other type of fish product</p>	<p>a) Socio-economic and cultural study, identify potential groups, analysis of their structure and definition of projects, programmes of support and development</p> <p>b) Elaborate specific development projects</p> <p>c) Promote community seminars</p>
<p>Province: Nampula</p> <p>Districts: Angoche, Moma and Mussoril</p> <p>Target group: Women gatherers/fishers and sellers of octopus, bivalves and other type of fish product</p>	<p>a) Socio-economics and cultural study, identify potential groups, analyse their structure and define projects/ programmes of support and development:</p> <p>b) Elaborate specific development project</p> <p>c) Promote community seminars</p>
<p>Province: Sofala</p> <p>Districts: Beira and Machanga (Chiloane island)</p> <p>Target group: fisherwomen and sellers of small shrimp (tépuè) and other type of fish product</p>	<p>a) Socio-economic and cultural study, identify potential groups, analyse their structure and define projects/ programmes of support and development:</p> <p>b) Elaborate specific projects of development.</p> <p>c) Promote community seminars</p>
<p>Province: Inhambane, Gaza and Maputo</p> <p>Districts: Still to investigate and identify</p> <p>Target group: Women sellers of fish product (intermediaries)</p>	<p>a) Socio-economic and cultural study, identify potential groups, analyse their structure and define projects/ programmes of support and development.</p> <p>b) Elaborate specific development projects.</p> <p>c) Promote community seminars</p>

IV. Bibliography

Backgaard, M. O papel da mulher na produção e comercialização de peixe em Cabo Delgado, Relatório, Maputo, 1992.

C.A.S.A. Feasibility study on small scale fisheries support stations in Mozambique, s/l, 1991.

Conceição, R. da. Les Communautés de Marins-Pêcheurs de la province de Cabo Delgado, Maputo, 1990.

Gervásio, H & Bukali, F. O papel da mulher na comercialização de pescado na zona sul de Moçambique, IDPPE, Maputo, 1996.

Johnsen, V. The Fishermen and Intermediaries in Mozambique, Maputo, 1993.

