

BOOK

**Women and men in small-scale fisheries and aquaculture in Asia**

**Barriers, constraints and opportunities towards equality and secure livelihoods; 186 pages; 2022; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); Bangkok, Thailand. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb9527en>**

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Asia accounts for the highest labour force participation in the small-scale fisheries and aquaculture across all regions of the world. While, historically, the role of women in this context has been all but invisible, in the last decade or so, notable efforts are being made to raise awareness on women’s contribution to, and promote gender equality within, fisheries and aquaculture supply chains. The book under review is an important step forward in this direction.

The study reviews the gender-related literature on small-scale fisheries and aquaculture published in the decade 2011 to 2021, and consolidates the recommendations offered in the reviewed literature. Specifically, it seeks to inquire into the forms and implications of gender-based division of labour, analyse the drivers of these differences, and identify entry points and opportunities for addressing inequalities and discriminatory practices.

In most people’s minds, there is a direct association between oceans, fish, and fishermen, which leaves women completely out of the picture. Studies however show that women are active in many aspects of fisheries and aquaculture industry, including pre- and post-fishing activities as

well as shore-based fishing activities such as gleaning, such as repairing nets, sale of fish, fish processing, drying and fermentation of fisheries catch, and so on. However, women’s invisibility in the fisheries and aquaculture value chains, perpetuated by the lack of gender-disaggregated data, means that there are few initiatives to support women. Further, men tend to dominate high-value species while women are typically relegated to low paying jobs in the informal sector which increases their vulnerability to economic, social, health and environmental

shocks. In the community and family, women are burdened with the bulk of the care work for families, including elderly, children and sick or disabled relatives, while men tend to be considered as only income-generators.

These gender differences translate to inequalities in terms of access to assets, resources and entitlements across education, information, knowledge, finance, infrastructure as well as social capital, creating a self-perpetuating vicious cycle of disadvantage for women. Women end up bearing a heavier burden of invisible and unacknowledged work with lower access to resources, and consequently, their well-being levels are seriously compromised, with the heaviest burdens borne by female-headed households and women in situations of domestic violence.

The study identifies several entry points for addressing gender inequalities in fisheries and aquaculture. These include the collection of gender-disaggregated data; comprehensive research on gender in aquaculture; gender analysis of fisheries and aquaculture industries, businesses, communities, families and fisheries associations; awareness-raising on women’s roles and capacities to strengthen their entitlements among policy makers, associations, communities and families; encouraging equitable sharing of household labour; increasing women’s participation in developing technologies and projects suitable for women; organizing women’s groups to increase women’s visibility; mainstreaming gender in fisheries budgets and policy; addressing gender-based violence and the specific needs of female-headed households and women left behind.

This book is a welcome addition to literature in the post-COVID publication slump and the recommendations of the authors are both important and actionable. These recommendations will not only strengthen women’s position, but also lead to a stronger and more stable fisheries and aquaculture industries. Such decadal reviews of research are also useful in terms of setting new directions and agendas in research. **Y**



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write-ups should be brief, about 2000 words. They could deal with issues that are of direct relevance to women and men of fishing communities. They could also focus on recent research or on meetings and workshops that have raised gender issues in fisheries. Also welcome are life stories of women and men of fishing communities working towards

a sustainable fishery or for a recognition of their work within the fishery. Please also include a one-line biographical note on the writer.

Please do send us comments and suggestions to make the newsletter more relevant. We look forward to hearing from you and to receiving regular write-ups for the newsletter.