
News/ Malawi**Even women can fish**

Women around Lake Malawi are learning how to fish

Excerpted from an article by Marcus Muhariwa on 15 November 2005 in The Daily Times, a newspaper from Malawi

Some statistics years back indicated that fish is the relish that dominates meals in most households of Malawi regardless of their status or economic stand. When Malawians step into the market place, chances are that, at least, twice in a week they would go back home with some fish. It could be *matemba*, *utaka* or the internationally recognized and locally respected *chambo*.

But as the fish is being eaten in these households, how many Malawians think about who caught it? It is likely that nobody does and if they do, which would be once in a long while, none would countenance a thought that it was a woman who caught the fish. Yes, women. They venture into the lake on a boat in the wee hours of the morning and catch fish just like the men do.

Mangochi is the most popular lakeshore district of Malawi and almost everyone knows that most boys in the district are brought up to be fishermen and what talented, creative and respected fishermen they are. Just as the district is known for the fishermen, the women in the district are trying to break this hegemony, not as the best fishermen's wives or the best cooks of fish but as fisherwomen. Spurred by the doctrines of gender equality and pampered by stories of urban women who have taken the challenge to wear boots and do men's work, women here have started going into Lake Malawi—not to draw water but to fish.

“We had a visit from some officials from the National Initiative for Civic Education (Nice) who told us that we could also do jobs that men do like building houses and fishing,” said Jennifer Banda, secretary for the Kwalole Women's Fishing Club in Sub-Traditional Authority Namavi's area. “Men and some boys in our villages started teaching us how to row boats and going into the lake to cast nets. It was very difficult at first because the job is very physical, but we started getting used to it,” Banda said.

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