

DOCUMENT

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE SEAFOOD INDUSTRY

Marie Christine Monfort, **GLOBEFISH** consultant. **GLOBEFISH** Research Programme, Vol. 119, Rome, FAO 2015. 67 pp.

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Women represent nearly half the working population in fisheries worldwide. The World Bank estimates that 47 per cent of the around 120 million people working in the sector, including those in capture fishing and post-harvest occupations, are women. In aquaculture alone, the sector of fisheries that is growing the fastest, nearly 70 per cent of the total workforce is women. Their importance is therefore critical.

However, when we consider participation in the sector, women are excluded from positions of power and influence, often by cultural norms, societal conventions and sometimes by discriminatory laws. Women are generally barred from specific 'male' jobs like going to sea on fishing vessels, deprived of ownership

rights, and have limited access to finance and insurance services, and to modern fishing technology. They do not generally occupy positions of leadership within organizations of fisherpeople and fishworkers.

There is also sparse research interest and reliable data available on participation of women in the industry, their access to resources and decision making processes. Women receive low priority in any planning process to do with economic

development or regulatory measures in the sector. Consequently, it is the case that the lower the remuneration and the lower the gain generated along the value chain, the greater is the participation of women. The largest numbers are employed in jobs involving maximum drudgery and the least security and remuneration.

The present report tries to analyse precisely these aspects of the fishing sector. Based on secondary data, it covers an extensive bibliography of published and unpublished information sources. A detailed and well argued background note is followed by specific case studies of fisheries in Croatia, Egypt, France, Iceland, India and Senegal, covering different cultural contexts, and diverse development models from artisanal to industrial, from commercial to subsistence oriented, from import substituting industrialization to market led export oriented growth.

The report stresses how women in fisheries are worst affected by adversities, highlighting the impact of climate change on women in fisheries. Noteworthy is a London School of Economics study based on analysing disasters in 141 countries, which concludes that "when women's rights are not protected, more women than men will die from disasters". It examines institutional efforts to improve the conditions of women in the sector, including the UN Millennium Summit initiative, the SSF Guidelines, and gender mainstreaming efforts, and finds significant failures.

This report is important for all audiences, in particular for policy makers in charge of developing new projects and policies for fisheries sector to be sensitized to the needs of women. The case studies and the extensive bibliography make it a valuable document for researchers and those seeking a better understanding of the gender divide in fishing. **Y**



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Writers and potential contributors to YEMAYA, please note that write-ups should be brief, about 500 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.

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