

DOCUMENT

Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in fisheries and aquaculture

The document is available at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6623e.pdf>

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This 12 page fact sheet presents an overview of current gender equality and women's empowerment issues in the fisheries sector. It is a useful summary document that can be used for many purposes—training and capacity building, as an information booklet, as a media supplement and so on. The following description is adapted from the introduction to the document.

No matter which perspective is used to analyse women's engagement in fisheries, the fact is that women's roles are highly underestimated. This inadequate recognition of women's contributions hampers the sustainable development process, resulting in increased poverty and food insecurity.

The document provides information on policy, institutions and planning processes, on statistical dimensions in gender analysis, and, on specific concerns in the field of fisheries industries. It identifies lessons learned and opportunities for gender mainstreaming at various levels. Certain relevant approaches for enhancing women's role in sustainable fisheries and aquaculture development are broadly indicated.

In the fisheries sector, men and women engage in distinct and often complementary activities that are strongly influenced by the social, cultural and economic contexts they live in. Male-female relations vary greatly and are based on economic status, power relations, and access to productive resources and services.

In most regions, fish catching is male dominated. Ocean-going boats for offshore and deep-sea fishing have male crew, while, in coastal artisanal fishing communities,

women often manage smaller boats and canoes. Women are mostly responsible for skilled and time consuming onshore tasks, such as making and mending nets, processing and marketing catches, and providing services to the boats. In western Africa and Asia, as much as 60 per cent of seafood is marketed by women, and in many parts of the world they also do a significant amount of shellfish gathering/clam gleaning—a fishery activity that is often under-recognized, or not recognized at all.

As in other sectors, women's empowerment in fisheries requires an examination of their means of production, gender relationships, and how to create equalities in their access to resources, services and employment opportunities. New institutional arrangements are being created as climate change, resource depletion, aquaculture development and global trade shape and reshape the fisheries sector. These must ensure new opportunities for equitable resource access rights, access to markets, benefits from aquaculture and codes of conduct in the industry, especially for the most marginalized and poorest categories of men and women.

Future research is required to better understand women's and men's roles and relationships in the fisheries sector and to promote more sustainable and equitable fisheries development. Even after two decades of highlighting women's roles in fisheries, comprehensive and accurate sex-disaggregated statistics are lacking, and this gap must be filled as the first step in gender mainstreaming at the policy level. There are efforts required to be taken at various levels to achieve gender equality in fisheries.

The document provides information on lessons learnt. It also looks at how to integrate gender analysis in fisheries projects. It gives examples of gender sensitive indicators in the sustainable management of marine resources. ■



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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.

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.