



36 Years in Support of
Small-scale Fishworkers



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Yemaya

ICSF'S NEWSLETTER ON GENDER AND FISHERIES

From the Editor

An FAO review dated November 2021 of the 2012 Hidden Harvest Report concluded that small-scale and subsistence fisheries provide livelihood to 113 million people, of whom around 40 per cent are women. According to the report, these women are present in pre-harvest (gear fabrication and boat building), harvest, post-harvest (processing and trade), and subsistence fishing. However, their informal and unpaid activities consistently get under-reported.

The work of women in small-scale fisheries can be very varied. While their post-harvest roles are better acknowledged, women's direct involvement in fish harvesting for both nutritional security as well as incomes, is increasingly being uncovered and documented. In India, from the northernmost regions of Jammu and Kashmir, where women fish snow trout and harvest water chestnuts, to its southern most states where, for example, in husband-wife teams, women use gillnets in the backwaters in Kerala or dive to the seafloor to harvest seaweed in Tamil Nadu, women's labour is the backbone of poor, fishery-dependent families. While the fishing practices are varied, they have two common traits: they are traditional to the communities, and they are vital for survival in the subsistence fishing economies.

Women also provide critical support to men in fisheries. The experience of fishing communities from Thailand, Cambodia and Myanmar demonstrates the significance of women's vital roles, whether it is in maintaining fishing gear or participating in the onshore activities of fish sorting, processing and trading. Fish harvest alone, without women's labour in these vital support tasks, would be stripped of value. These activities, however, do not get counted in official fisheries statistics. It requires specialised surveys by the FAO in its 'The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture' (SOFIA) reports to reveal that women's work on the aggregate is nearly half of all work in the small-scale fisheries.

While the challenges that women face are theirs alone, often the burdens of men and families also fall upon women's shoulders. A study in Philippines documented how women equally suffered when the menfolk, be they husbands or sons, faced harassment and exploitation aboard sea vessels. When men suffered losses, or were denied wages on various pretexts, women had to bear the burden of keeping the family afloat with their earnings. They could not afford to buckle under, given the responsibility they had of managing the household and its needs. The experience of several fisheries communities during the COVID-19 pandemic was further testimony to women's resilience in facing up to adversities.

The resilience of women fishers does not stop with adversities alone. They are also often innovators and entrepreneurs. In the coastal villages of Kuching, Sarawak, women without any formal qualifications run food businesses, survey market prices and manage their fish trade. They have proved that with some public support they can be the agents for change in their small fishing communities. We come round here to the central issue: the role of women being made invisible in all enumeration of fisheries statistics, and therefore their absence largely from the planning agenda for the states. In a world riven by strife and inequality, vulnerable communities suffer the most; women in these communities are the ones who need to be empowered to play leadership roles. This is an important message for consideration in this March edition of Yemaya. ■

OLIVIER BARBAROUX

Girl in a fish market, Pusan,
South Korea





Introduction to this special issue on Women and Labour

As the fisheries and aquaculture sector discusses major policy changes – forced labour at sea, illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing (IUU), COVID-19 – women's work is often overlooked, too easily wiped out of public view, receiving very little attention or support. When women's labour is examined, this attention is rather piecemeal and descriptive. The articles in this issue of *Yemaya* are drawn from the presentations and discussions at the webinar, 'Women Work in Fisheries, Too!' Held on 29 November 2021, the webinar identified areas that respond to the inaccurate and inadequate portrayal of women's work in Asian fisheries. The webinar was part of the 8th Global Symposium on Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries and the US Agency for International Development Sustainable Fish Asia Local Capacity Development (USAID SUFIA LCD) Activity's initiative to increase awareness and action on women and labour in fisheries. It was co-organised by the USAID SUFIA LCD, Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries Section (GAFS) of the Asian Fisheries Society, Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security (CTI-CFF), ICAR-Indian Agricultural Research Institute and Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT).

The GAFS is a professional society focused on gender research and related activities that help advocate for the advancement of women in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. USAID SUFIA LCD focuses on strengthening regional capacities and collaboration in combating IUU fishing, promoting sustainable fishing practices, and addressing labour issues and insights along the fisheries value chains, including land-based fisheries workers who are mostly overlooked. The CTI-CFF wishes to raise awareness of women's contributions, using a gender equality and social inclusion and gender mainstreaming approach in marine biodiversity conservation, sustainable fisheries, and climate change adaptation. In its fisheries research and development work ICAR-CIFT recognises that women are vital in marketing and fish processing, comprising a large workforce that is often not well organised to advocate for better outcomes.

Arlene Nietes Satapornvanit and Meryl J Williams write that a shared understanding on gender and labour in fisheries would benefit from defining "some basic terms commonly used when applying a gender lens to activities in fish value chains, fisheries statistics, policies and interventions". Nikita Gopal illustrates the shortcomings of definitions by examining women's fishing in India, for which "no data or official records of women doing fishing" exist. Yet, recent studies find that women are often engaged in small-scale fishing, earning incomes and also feeding families. In studies in Cambodia, Myanmar, and Thailand that considered all workers, Jariya Sornkliang state: "we did not find any value chain in which all workers were of just one gender."

Ravadee Prasertcharoensuk recommends practical strategies to make women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an important part of marine and coastal policies and plans, without which "the gender gaps in marine and coastal biodiversity management will only widen". Joe Pres Gaudiano shares that women cope with stress, debt-burden, and extra work to make ends meet, and are the lead decision-makers regarding household finances, whether their fisher husbands are at sea or on land.

In the case of businesses in fisheries and other food and beverage sectors, Caterina Meloni found that "investor's demands, regulatory pressure and customer demands drive the growing importance of the gender dimension", but "that advancing gender equality in the workplace is not a linear process". It can be slower than foreseen. Indeed, Rachel Matheson pointed out that gender was the "glaring omission" from the certifications, codes of conduct, and non-profit partnerships happening in the sustainable seafood movement.

As Aazani Mujahid in her presentation indicated, women in coastal communities involved in food production should be given opportunities to become entrepreneurs, start up their own SMEs, and expand their small-scale businesses through selling both online and offline.

We recognise that this is still just a start, but, in the next five years, we hope there will be a much deeper understanding of women's work. To synthesise and elaborate the issues raised at the webinar, the partners are now developing a Cooperative Action Plan, assisted by an expert writing team in consultation with the webinar attendees. ▣

———— GAFS team

Making women's roles visible

Recent case studies in Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand explored women's roles in the fisheries value chain

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Women's contributions in the fisheries value chain are not well recognised, even though there are many tasks in the fisheries value chain involving women. To show how important the women involved in fisheries are, gender analysis on women and men's roles in fisheries is crucial. Gender analysis reveals context in a fishing community and promotes gender integration and responsiveness in fisheries development plans.

In the period 2017-2018, the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC), supported by the Government of Sweden and in partnership with the Mangroves for the Future project under the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN/MFF) as well as the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), conducted an important regional gender study in South and Southeast Asia. SEAFDEC selected the study sites in three areas, namely, Kep in Cambodia, Kawthaung in Myanmar, and Trat in Thailand. The study aimed to understand the state of women and men in the fisheries value chain of each study site. The study brought to light several interesting findings with respect

to women and men's roles in the fisheries value chains in each of the three study sites.

At Okra Sa and Thmey Villages, Kep Province (Cambodia), both women and men were involved in various fisheries activities. While men ventured to sea for fishing, women supported fisheries with onshore activities such as cleaning nets and vessels, cleaning, segregating processing and marketing the catch.

In Pu Lone Tone Tone, Kawthaung (Myanmar), women prepared food to supply men who conducted the fishing activities on board seagoing vessels and also maintained the fishing gear and the vessel. No women worked onboard the vessels at sea. The reason appeared to be due to the long periods involved in such fishing operations, ranging from a week to even a month at sea. Later, the catch would be unloaded and transported, with women responsible for the sorting, processing and selling of the fish.

In Mairoot Sub-district, Klong Yai, Trat Province (Thailand), husbands and wives participated in the fishing activities together because the fishing ground was not too far

SEAFDEC



Cutting fish for processing in Myanmar. Women's contributions in the fisheries value chain are not well recognised, even though there are many tasks in the fisheries value chain involving women



Street fish sale, Thailand. Fishery policymakers are required to better recognise the diverse roles and perspectives of men and women in fisheries to achieve equitable outcomes and livelihood sustainability goals in fishing communities

from their houses. They shared several activities together from cleaning and mending fishing gear, fish sorting on land, processing, and selling products to the middleman. However, only women prepared the food for onboard operations. There was no activity that men did alone in the Thai case study.

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, SEAFDEC conducted a rapid study on the impacts of the pandemic. The results found that many women became jobless and lost their incomes from shore-based activities because of the limited fishing periods in some areas or, in other areas, from markets closing during the pandemic. Online business platforms have become a significant adaptation of the family businesses to help them cope with the pandemic. Online business was mainly facilitated by women or younger family members and increased the interaction between family members.

Women take part in all the activities and processes of the fisheries value chain. However, women's roles are dominant in gear mending and cleaning, catch segregating, product processing, and marketing. Based on our findings, both men and women are involved in all the fisheries value chains. That is, we did not come across even one value chain in which all the workers were of one gender only. However, equal participation of men and women in terms of access and rights is still a distant dream.

The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic shows that women have high adaptation and resilience even under challenging pandemic circumstances. Therefore, women should be the target of focused efforts to develop human capacity in development programmes, such as by empowering women to generate and increase their fisheries incomes. Along with support for a greater economic role, women's attention to conservation also should be reconsidered so that they can help strengthen the sustainable utilisation of fishery resources.

In conclusion, fishery policymakers are required to better recognise the diverse roles and perspectives of men and women in fisheries to achieve equitable outcomes and livelihood sustainability goals in fishing communities. A key recommendation of this study, which was carried out before and after the pandemic, is better documentation of women's roles through the collection of sex-disaggregated data and through gender analyses of women's and men's roles in value chains. This will support fisheries project managers to plan realistic development programmes in fisheries management based on gender roles and needs. It will lead to more gender-sensitive and gender-responsive projects towards gender equity and equality in the fishing community. 📌

The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic shows that women have high adaptation and resilience even under challenging pandemic circumstances

Women's voice and identity

A development model driven solely by profit is eroding the small-scale fisheries and marine and coastal ecosystems in Thailand

By Ravadee Prasertcharoensuk (ravadee.prasertcharoensuk@gmail.com), Director: Sustainable Development Foundation, Bangkok, Thailand

The decades of so-called 'development' and discourses of fisheries modernisation and blue growth have failed to uplift small-scale fishers and address gender inequality. Instead, they have led to environmental damage, social and cultural disruption widened gender inequality, and increased the violation of human and collective rights. The economic-driven policies are unlikely to ensure sustainable development but rather, they will create tensions between the environment and natural resource dependent communities. Employment is reduced; landlessness increased; community commons privatised; food security decreased; health and well-being have been negatively impacted; and acts of intimidation and violence are commonly witnessed. In all this, women in small-scale fisheries and in traditional coastal communities have suffered. Women fishers are still bearing the brunt of the costs of gender differences and inequality. The negative impacts on women have resulted in persistent poverty. Pro-people, gender mainstreaming perspectives are urgently needed on the questions of livelihood, coastal

and marine commons governance, social justice, and ecological sustainability, in order to ensure that communities have full sovereignty over natural resources.

Marine and terrestrial ecosystems are an abundant source of social and economic benefits to human societies. They provide livelihood to many small-scale fishing communities whose ways of living have been connected to rivers, coasts and oceans. The communities' wisdom and knowledge of ecology and fishing are integral to the way they govern their ecosystems. Small-scale fisher communities, which support the majority of people in the fisheries sector, are dependent for their living on fishing as a principal source of income and nutrition. They engage in fishing from generation to generation. Some of them also manage small coastal aquaculture enterprises for an additional source of food and income.

The present growth-driven economic approach to fisheries and aquaculture which is based on exploiting ecosystems has caused conflict among resource users. Marine coastal resources have deteriorated as a result of the use

SDF / THAILAND



Women mending fishing gear, Thailand. Women's rights as sea-going fishers have not been recognised, and the roles of women in post-harvest value addition and sales have been ignored

of destructive fishing gears and capital intensive investments in coastal regions including the expansion of large-scale aquaculture in which the participants may be non-fishers. The fishers' coastal common properties are leased out to corporate firms or other private entities for profit-oriented commercial purposes such as manufacturing industries, tourism, power plants, and other infrastructural projects. Export-oriented industrial fishing has looted marine resources leaving fishing grounds to resemble deserts. As a result, small-scale fishers experience food insecurity, insecure livelihoods and low family incomes. Customary rights over the marine and coastal resources of sea, river and land have been eroded as governments now hold the majority of rights. Small-scale fishers, especially women fishers, have not been recognised nor meaningfully involved in either fishery or coastal resource management.

In fishing communities, the household usually functions as an economic unit where the roles of both men and women are complementary. Fishing is however seen as a male activity despite women playing critical and significant roles in fish production. Women work in direct productive activities including collecting, processing, preparing and marketing of fish and other marine resources. In addition, they play an indirect role in the fishing economy in terms of caring for and nurturing their children. However, these contributions are often unacknowledged or undercounted in employment data. Women are not included as fishers in the formal statistics and a large part of their work is unaccounted in economic valuations.

Policy directions promoting the fishing industry have created many problems for the small-scale fishing sector and for women fishers, who constitute the most vulnerable and invisible sections of fishing societies. Industrial fishing has diminished the role of women in fisheries and their involvement in the collection and culturing of molluscs, crustaceans, shells, oysters and other edible products in the coastal ecosystems. Women's rights as sea-going fishers have not been recognised, and the roles of women in post-harvest value addition and sales have been ignored, allowing them to be displaced by more prominent traders in the commercialised harbour-based global fish trade. The overall disempowerment of coastal communities and small-scale fishers impacts women in unique ways as the burden of adaptation falls upon them. Yet, their voices are seldom heard.

The devastation of coastal and marine capture fisheries resulted in unemployment, forced migration and exclusion of women fish workers. Traditional marine fishers were forced into culture fisheries for livelihoods. From being self-employed many fishers have been forced

into becoming workers in industrial companies where they generally occupy floor-level jobs, such as in seafood factories, and as contract workers in unskilled categories of work. This has also led to the further marginalisation of women who have no social protection against livelihood loss.

Women who used to be direct producers or sellers of seafood would first keep aside a portion of the fish for family consumption and then sell the remainder. With the decline of capture fisheries and the lack of opportunities in culture fisheries, these once self-employed women are now being forced into daily wage labour. Women in the fisheries sector are worse off as a result of the present economic model and the capital intensive growth in marine and coastal ecosystems that is wiping out marine and coastal resources. In addition to climate change and extreme weather events, these trends have threatened the livelihood and food security of small-scale fishers, particularly women.

The disproportionately negative impact on women is due to gendered cultural stereotypes that ascribe greater working burdens to women while restricting their access to resources, decision-making and participation in collective governance.

The prevailing development paradigm has shifted power away from traditional community-level governance mechanisms and into the hands of nation-state mechanisms driven by market interests. Fishing coastal communities have lost their sovereignty and are reduced to the status of environmental refugees in their own nations.

Evidence shows that the macroeconomic development paradigm has gradually resulted in a massive dislocation and displacement of traditional coastal communities towards harbour-based capital-intensive fisheries. This has damaged rivers, and riverine and coastal ecosystems, impacting the ways of living and livelihoods of small-scale fishers. Their exclusion from decision making processes has increased their vulnerability and workload and generated greater stress for women fishers looking after the health and nutrition of families and communities.

The result is a sea-change in the systems of knowledge, ecology and political economy vital for the prosperity and well-being of coastal communities and small-scale fishers, including women. The integrated nature of riverine, coastal, land and marine ecosystems has been totally absent in the mainstream public and policy discourse. Discussions on fisheries stock depletion and 'over-fishing' have overlooked these on-land anthropogenic factors. Resource depletion is a result not just of bad policy and destructive projects but also of the erosion of the right of local communities to govern resources

The prevailing development paradigm has shifted power away from traditional community-level governance mechanisms and into the hands of nation-state mechanisms driven by market interests

of which they were once the traditional custodians. Closely related to community governance of resources is food sovereignty. With the gradual destruction of small-scale fisheries, scores of families go without essential nutrients, and the reasonably better off become dependent on external markets for food. Thus, households are no longer in control of their own nutritional needs, and are increasingly dependent on markets or government welfare schemes. This brings into focus the question of food sovereignty where control of nutrition is being snatched away from the primary producer and the end consumer.

If national policies, plans and measures lack a gender perspective, they fail to recognise that women and men while sharing some basic needs also have other, divergent needs, interests, knowledge, skills and responsibilities concerning the use and management of coastal and marine resources. Practical strategies are therefore needed to make women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an important part of marine and coastal policies and plans. Without

these, the gender gaps in marine and coastal biodiversity management will only widen.

These challenges need a multi-pronged and holistic set of responses. Alternatives to the current paradigm of macroeconomic development are needed, as are workable solutions and strategies for the struggles that lie on the path. It is towards this goal that small-scale fishery networks envision the need for greater sovereignty over coastal commons for their primary stakeholders and advocate for an overall restructuring of resource governance. This aims at reversing the role of the state from ownership to custodian by bringing policy and legislative changes to protect and promote the traditional rights of coastal communities under international conventions such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines), as well as national and state-specific legislations. ❏

Milestones

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A treasure trove of data

There are many ways to study gender inequality. The World Inequality Report 2022 focuses on one key concept – gender pay gap. For a comprehensive understanding of where societies stand in terms of gender inequality at work, the relative overall shares of labour income accruing to women and men stands out as an essential indicator. However, this has been overlooked so far. The findings of the report indicate that it is the best metric to consider gender income inequality from a systemic perspective. The data presented below is the first data set on female labour income shares covering 180 countries since 1990.

Since gender inequality has many dimensions, it is pertinent that different metrics are used to properly track its dynamics across the globe. For instance, analysing labour income shares is an important dimension as it shows how incomes are split between women and men at the societal level, as opposed to a given sector of the economy or a given position. This offers a systemic perspective rather than income gaps that are typically discussed in public debates. The female labour income share is also straightforward to interpret: since women represent half

the population, in a gender equal society they would earn half of all labour income.

The Gender Inequality Index developed by the United Nations Human Development Programme (UNDP) is composed of different dimensions of gender inequality, including women's participation in labour markets, women's health with a focus on maternal mortality and teenage births, and 'empowerment' indicators, which cover gender inequality in access to both higher education, and to seats in parliament.

Indicator values for different world regions in 2018 present striking information. The numbers indicate that maternal mortality ratios can vary by a factor of 20 between Europe/Central Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, while inequality in shares of parliamentary seats varies by a factor of just two between the most unequal and the least unequal regions.

The report indicates that focusing on a single dimension is not enough to explain the drivers and dynamics of gender inequality, but then neither are composite indexes alone.

The complete report is available at https://wir2022.wid.world/www-site/uploads/2022/03/0098-21_WIL_RIM_RAPPORT_A4.pdf ❏

Decent work, thriving businesses

A cooperative action plan currently under draft aims to address labour and entrepreneurship challenges for women in fisheries

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Gender inequality is one of the most pressing barriers in the fisheries sector's labour market. Women workers in Asian fish value chains constitute a large share of the world's fishworkers. In addition to their productive activities, these women are responsible for reproductive activities/unpaid work within their households and communities. However, they face numerous challenges to participating in and benefiting from the sector. Furthermore, the social and economic issues women face in the fisheries and aquaculture sector tend to receive little or no attention.

With this in mind, prior to the 29 November 2021 webinar 'Women Work in Fisheries, Too!', the Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries Section of the Asian Fisheries Society (GAFS), in collaboration with US Agency for International Development Sustainable Fish Asia Local Capacity Development (USAID SUFIA

LCD) activity, convened a team of experts to develop the first draft of 'Decent Work and Thriving Businesses for Women in Fisheries: A Cooperative Action Plan'. The objective of the Cooperative Action Plan is to provide guidance to fisheries stakeholders/entities in the Asia-Pacific region on actions to improve women's access to gender-just, equitable and inclusive labour conditions.

The Cooperative Action Plan begins by identifying and planning to address contemporary issues pertaining to gender and labour in the Asian fisheries and aquaculture sector. The action plan is targeted at steps that individuals and organisations working in the sector can take in the next five years. The first draft was revised by the expert writing team and partners and will be subject to wider consultation, especially from the participants of the webinar, before being finalised and published.

DETOUR ODISHA / WORLD FISH / WWW.FLICKR.COM



Fisherwomen from the Jai Hanuman Women's self-help group with their freshly caught fish, Nuagaon Gram Panchayat, Odisha, India. Young women workers are expected to have safe working environments, free from any harassment, enabling their personal growth and development

The Cooperative Action Plan aims for women working in the sector to be given attention, voice, and strong representation in decision making roles in policy, sector bodies, and business. It also highlights the interests and contributions of youth and vulnerable groups of women and aims for them to be represented in policy and decision making. Sex-disaggregated and gender data, as well as data on intersectional factors, needs to be collected to inform research and development conducted in the sector. Finally, it also seeks for actions relating to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, management and changes in the value chain, climate change, and the COVID-19 pandemic to be taken into consideration and incorporated in recovery programmes, policies, and interventions.

There are three clusters of articles in the action plan: 1) Domains of Fisheries Labour, 2) Groups Frequently Overlooked, and 3) Cooperative Action for Change. Within each of the clusters, there are several articles or thematic areas.

This first article, 'Domains of Fisheries Labour' covers the themes of small-scale fishery value chains, industrial fishery value chains, reproductive and care labour, fisheries management, public and private sector management, research and monitoring.

The outcomes sought in small-scale fishery value chains are to forge greater formal recognition that leads to improved labour conditions for women and improves the uptake of gender equality provisions of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines). These outcomes will be achieved through raising awareness and formal recognition of the productive roles of women in small-scale fisheries (SSF), strengthening protection for women in SSF and enabling them to have a voice in all processes within the sector. There are also plans to formally recognise women's SSF labour as a legitimate fishing activity and for women to be provided with partnerships and programmes supporting technologies, skills, and linkages in post-harvest processing and trading nodes of the fish value chains.

In industrial fisheries, the dignity of labour for women workers, including migrant workers, involving decent working spaces and conditions is the main outcome targeted. This includes raising awareness on issues about women in industrial fisheries, strengthening the database of women and their work profiles, empowering women engaged in the industrial fish value chain labour market, and forging partnerships.

Reproductive and care labour aims for a promising and better quality of life for fisherwomen and the acceptance of women as equal partners in the development process and equal contributors within the household, workplace and community. These outcomes

will be achieved through the collection of sex-disaggregated and gender data, the use of social change by working with fisher families, addressing harmful gender norms, and enabling women to take up leadership positions.

The fisheries management, public and private sector management, research and monitoring themes aim for women and men to have equal recruitment and promotion opportunities and outcomes and to be treated justly at work. To achieve this requires that gender equity policies are improved, organisations collect and publish sex-disaggregated and gender data, and commit to gender-budgeting.

The second article, 'Groups Frequently Overlooked', covers themes on young, elderly, and indigenous women.

Young women workers are expected to have safe working environments, free from any harassment, enabling their personal growth and development, and improved agency and well-being. These outcomes will be achieved through raising awareness on employability and creating safe and rewarding employment for young women and men. Improved capacities in entrepreneurship, empowering youth-led organisations, including start-ups and SMEs, and partnerships for youth-focused interventions were some of the activities proposed to achieve these outcomes.

On the theme of the elderly, it is envisioned that the sector will conduct assessments of the extent of work, welfare and social needs for elderly women and men. It will recognise their contributions and needs, and provide support accordingly to enable them to lead a dignified and productive life. These outcomes will be achieved through an assessment of numbers, locations, and needs of elderly women and men who are dependent on the sector. The theme further seeks to establish strengthened systems for social security for elderly women who are engaged in micro and small-scale value chains and for senior-preneurship for women in the fishing communities. It also recommends partnerships between government and civil societies that have expertise in working with the elderly for their productive aging.

The third theme in this cluster is indigenous women. The outcome sought is for indigenous women and men to have an equal opportunity in the sector to enable them to access resources, labour and entrepreneurial opportunities. It also expects indigenous people, especially women, to be equally represented in the policy-making processes. These outcomes will be achieved through the recognition and inclusion of indigenous women and their labour through reliable data. The theme also intends to draw attention to their labour and empower these women through their inclusion and representation in decision making bodies concerned with the fishery. Partnership among women's groups would also be a means to



Fish smoking near the Tonle Sap lake in Siem Reap, Cambodia. During disaster recovery and rehabilitation, women's labour and roles in the economy should be recognised and taken fully into account

network, share experience, and learn from each other.

The third cluster, 'Cooperative Action for Change', covers themes on building the evidence base for action, collective action, and fisher organisation, and labour disruptions by human and natural disasters.

The theme on building the evidence base for action seeks reliable gender statistics on labour engagement for fish value chains and a quantum leap in the knowledge of women and men's work, power, and gender relations affecting their labour opportunities and benefits. These can be achieved through developing and disseminating a handbook for collecting reliable gender statistics, strengthening social science research capabilities on women's labour at all scales, institutions, and nodes of fish value chains. The commitments of research agencies are also crucial to generating the intended outcomes.

The next theme is collective action and fisher organisation. Its outcome seeks for enhanced participation and leadership of women fisher's organisations and collective action in the sector as a pathway to decent work and access to social protection. These outcomes were intended to be achieved through the creation of fisherfolk, i.e., women's collectives, through recognition of all fishing activities and formalisation of activities, strengthened representation of the collectives and organisations in state consultations, and the empowerment of women to enable their voices to be heard and for them to assume leadership positions in women's and fisherfolk organisations. This theme also aims to reduce barriers to accessing social protection schemes for and establishing partnerships between fisherfolk organisations, women's collectives and the State.

The third theme is on labour disruptions by human and natural disasters. During disaster recovery and rehabilitation, women's labour and roles in the economy should be recognised and taken fully into account, their needs being represented in decision making, recovery budgeting and programming, as well as in monitoring progress. These outcomes will be achieved through the integration of women's economic and care interests into planning and recovery efforts, with their rights and opportunities secured with post-emergency rehabilitation through gender responsive budgeting. Other means to achieve the outcomes include strengthening opportunities for diversified livelihoods for women before, during and after emergencies. Households and community care will also be emphasised to ensure that greater than normal burdens do not fall on women, which could further impede their financial recovery. Women's representation in emergency preparedness, through to recovery and rehabilitation, will be crucial to ensure partnerships are formed across government agencies, civil societies, the private sector, and other relevant groups.

The draft Cooperative Action Plan represents the opinions of gender in fisheries experts on the most appropriate short and medium term steps that organisations in the fisheries and aquaculture sector can take. Moving forward, the webinar participants and organising partners will develop a communication and dissemination plan to promote the actions shared above to achieve the outcomes within each of the articles and thematic areas. These will be widely promoted not only via press and on social media platforms but also through the participants and organising partners' activities and research in the sector. ■

The objective of the Cooperative Action Plan is to provide guidance to fisheries stakeholders/entities in the Asia-Pacific region on actions to improve women's access to gender just, equitable, and inclusive labour conditions

Do women fish?

Case studies from India highlight the vital but little-recognised role that women play as fishers

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It is now acknowledged that women account for 50 per cent of the workforce in fisheries and aquaculture, especially when we take into account their work in post-harvest activities like processing and trading. The findings of the 'Illuminating Hidden Harvests' report show that, globally, about one in four workers in small-scale fisheries are women. However, women, especially in developing countries, face substantive challenges to engaging in and benefitting equitably from these sectors. Several studies have pointed out that they have poor access to and control of resources. Also, in India, women are losing out on the traditional access rights they had on landed fish due to factors like mechanisation of fishing vessels. Further, deep-seated patriarchal, cultural and social norms limit their engagement. Most of women's work

is in the form of unpaid family labour, which is seen as an extension of household reproductive roles. Incomes they earn for similar work are lower as compared to men, for example, in seafood processing or in fish vending. In dry fish processing and trade, a transition from processors/traders, to low paid and sometimes unpaid labour, is being observed. The one node in fish value chains that engages women and yet is hardly acknowledged, however, is fish harvesting. In India, about 49 per cent of the 2.5 million adult population in marine fishing communities in India, are women. Of the adult population in these communities, 81 per cent of men and 33 per cent of women are reported to be employed in the sector. There are no reports of women in fish harvesting, although 58 per cent of all seed collectors are women

PRIYANKA AJAY NAKHAWA / ICAR-CIFT and ICAR-CIFE



Women gillnet fishers, Raigad, Maharashtra, India. Women mend and make nets, they collect seed, they sort fish when landed, they auction fish and they engage in vending both in markets and door-to-door. They also do fishing

and a massive 74 per cent of all allied workers too, which includes work like net making and mending, marketing, curing and processing, peeling, labour, other jobs.

If we were to formally record all the jobs that women carry out in fisheries their profiles would be highly varied. Women mend and make nets, they collect seed, they sort fish when landed, they auction fish and they engage in vending both in markets and door-to-door. They also dry excess catch or the catch that is specifically meant for drying, they smoke and ferment fish, collect seaweed and work in small-scale pre-processing and commercial processing. They also do fishing. These myriad activities are however, not captured comprehensively.

Besides all this, women bear almost all the burden of household work. A 2019 survey in India found that women (including fisherwomen) spent on average five hours and fifteen minutes in a day doing domestic chores such as cooking, cleaning and washing. And one third of the women, mostly those with young children, spend on average another two hours and seventeen minutes every day caring for and instructing children: seven and a half hours in all. And interestingly, for women who have received higher education, the burden of such work is not significantly different than for other women.

There are no data or official records of women doing fishing. Their fishing activities are often termed 'subsistence', which, by definition, is something that is done for maintaining or supporting oneself at a minimal level. Our studies over the past few years, however, show that women do not always only carry out subsistence fishing. Their activities ensure nutritional security as well as additional incomes, and the women themselves consider fishing as their distinct livelihood activity.

In our studies we have documented several cases where women are engaged in reservoir-based fish harvest. Reservoirs are large inland water resources that can help increase fish production. Since the main function of reservoirs is usually power generation or irrigation, reservoir-based fishing is generally considered a spin-off, secondary activity. Reservoirs are stocked with fish by the Department of Fisheries of the respective states, and fishing rights are leased either to individuals or cooperative societies. Coracle fishing or fishing using small canoes with gear such as gillnets is commonly seen. Generally, fishing is carried out by husband-wife teams and up to 80 per cent of household income comes from this activity. Since equal effort is expended, half of this income is the direct contribution of the women.

Lakes and rivers are important inland water bodies too. In Wular Lake in Jammu and Kashmir, women carry out fishing of snow trouts

and common carps, and harvest water chestnut locally called trapa for their livelihoods. The fish is either sold fresh or processed and is in high demand especially during winters. In Loktak Lake in the north-eastern part of India, women use small canoes for fishing using dip nets, scoop nets and traps fabricated using locally available bamboo. The fish is marketed locally.

As in the case of lakes and rivers, fishing in India's coastal backwaters and estuaries has also been documented. In the southern state of Kerala, husband-wife teams carry out fishing using gillnets in the Vembanad backwaters. The marketing is undertaken by the husband, but the wife is an equal partner in all other tasks.

In Raigad, Maharashtra, women along with men engage in single-day gillnet fishing in estuaries, fishing at depths of between three to five fathoms (about 5.5 to 9 metres) and harvest ribbon fish, shrimps, mullets, croakers, and golden anchovy. Women are solely responsible for marketing either in their villages or in faraway markets, depending on the volume of catches.

Bheels are unique to the north-eastern part of the country. These are flood plain wetlands, low-lying areas bordering large rivers, which are seasonally inundated by the overspill from the main river. Women in large numbers engage in fishing using unique dip nets, sometimes reaching the shallow fishing grounds in canoes. These bheels are dominated by nutrient-rich small fishes, ensuring the nutritional security of the households of these women. These fish are an important constituent of the diet of the people in the region and are rich in nutrients.

The pokkali fields are part of the wetland ecosystem typical in Kerala. These are lands where the alternate 'rice-fish system' has been traditionally practised. The fish/shrimp culture that takes place alternately with rice production utilises a natural filtration process. Of late farmers have also been stocking these farms. These lands are open to whoever wishes to fish on it once one crop is harvested and before the second is taken up. Generally women (and very few men) glean or fish and shrimp from these fields. They use small indigenous scoop nets for harvesting, following the lunar cycle to decide on when to fish (fishing close to the full moon and new moon days). Daily fishing can extend up to six hours, in neck deep water. Feeder canals to these lands are also potential sources of fish, where the women carry out the activity when the lands, during the cropping season, are declared out of bounds. The fish is used for household consumption, with the excess being marketed fresh.

Women working in groups also use indigenous gear like coconut leaves for fishing in these areas, collecting the fish by dragging the fronds in the water and handpicking the fish. Again in the northeastern parts of the country,

Women are engaged in various activities in small-scale fish value chains; in the first place, their work needs to be recognised as fish work

we see dip nets being used on the margins of paddy fields for fishing. Women in groups also travel to a neighbouring district and fish in paddy fields, ditches and other waterlogged areas. They go out in groups, fish for about five hours, and then proceed to the market to sell the catch. Groups comprising young and older women from local fisher communities in Raigad, Maharashtra, glean oysters, gastropods and crabs from inshore waters and creeks, using curved blades on a wooden handle. Women from Ramanathapuram in Tamil Nadu in South India, for decades have dived into the waters to harvest seaweed. Seaweed farming is in fact extensively carried out by women.

These are just some examples from among several thousands of women, engaged in fishing in India but who are not licenced fishers. Women

are engaged in various activities in small-scale fish value chains; in the first place, their work needs to be recognised as fish work. Women's work makes significant contributions to household incomes and nutritional security. Women are also a major workforce in fish harvesting across the country. Prevailing estimates of 33 per cent of women being part of the workforce therefore need realistic revision. The impact of different stressors is different on men and women; this needs to be recognised too. Gender should be central to policy development and all women in the sector should be recognised as fishworkers. A comprehensive census to generate on-the-ground factual information on women and their contributions must be taken up. ❏



PROFILE

Amplifying women's voices: Margaret Nakato's important work in organising women in small-scale fisheries in Uganda has received international recognition

By **Sivaja Nair** (icsf@icsf.net), Programme Executive, ICSE, India

Margaret Nakato, Executive Director of the Katosi Women Development Trust (KWDT), Uganda, was awarded the prestigious Margarita Lizárraga Medal for the biennium 2020-2021, at the launch event of the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture in November 2019. This medal is the latest among the many accolades she has received in recognition of her efforts in organising women in fishing communities. See the article 'A well-deserved award' in this issue of *Yemaya* for the full text of Margaret Nakato's acceptance speech.

Margaret began to associate with the cause of women in fisheries after witnessing the catastrophic socio-economic changes brought about by the increased catch and export of Nile perch to Europe from Katosi landing site, Uganda, in the mid-1990s. Soaring export rates and sharp declines in access to fisheries resources for the local fish vendors, especially women, resulted in the loss of their jobs. Margaret watched in helplessness as many of the powerful, proud and financially independent women in her family and community faced livelihood loss and fell into the trap of poverty. Looking for alternate sources that would bring income into the lives of these women, Margaret began to realise that their strength lay in organising themselves to sustain their living and to secure their rights to engage in fisheries.

Thus, in 1996, in collaboration with a group of women, Margaret formed Katosi Women

Fishing Group, which subsequently became Katosi Women Development Trust, to coordinate the increasing organisation of women's groups in the community. The Trust supports women, especially from isolated fishing communities, to strengthen engagement in fisheries and other economic activities through access to productive resources, knowledge and skills to improve on their lives.

Right from its inception, KWDT has been involved in multidimensional aspects of development, increasing access to basic social needs such as water and sanitation, knowledge and skill empowerment of women to make informed choices and secure livelihood, and tenure rights. Margaret has been collaborating with governments at local and national levels and with international agencies like the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in formulating and implementing gender-just and sustainable policies influencing the lives of men and women in small-scale fisheries. Margaret believes that there is still a dearth of recognition of women's needs – access to basic amenities, governance of natural resources and risk aversion mechanisms that would help them avoid cycles of deprivation.

Margaret calls for direct investment and collaboration in support of women fishworkers on a broad spectrum of development issues to secure their roles in the sector. She believes that the way for inclusive development is through organised structures at national and international coalitions, and urges women to make their voices heard and fight for their space in the policy making sphere.

Margaret holds a Master of Science degree in development management funded through the Commonwealth Foundation scholarship. She lives in Kampala with her family, including four children, and continues to champion the cause of small-scale fisheries. ❏

A well-deserved award

During a virtual ceremony in 2021, the FAO Director-General, presented the Margarita Lizarraga Medal, to Margaret Nakato

By **Margaret Nakato**
(mnakato@worldfisher-forum.org) Executive Director, Katosi Women Development Trust, Uganda and Member of World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF)

MARGARET NAKATO



During a virtual ceremony on the 19th of November 2021, the FAO Director-General, QU Dongyu presented the Margarita Lizarraga Medal, to Margaret Nakato of the Katosi Women Development Trust in Uganda, whom he praised for her work in organising women in fishing communities to work together, empowering them with knowledge and skills, access to training, technology and markets.

The award is bestowed to a person or organisation that has served with distinction in the application of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. Thanking the Director-General and FAO, Nakato said the award would inspire the women she works with, to continue to support food security and the eradication of poverty.

The text of the acceptance speech is reproduced below:

Dear Director-General and Distinguished Guests,

I stand here in honour and appreciation of the 166 FAO Council for awarding me the Margarita Lizarraga Medal in recognition of my humble contribution to women in fisheries through Katosi Women Development Trust. It is, indeed, a great privilege to be added to the list of previous winners of this prestigious award.

Since 1996, my passion has been to place women in positions where they can contribute to decisions that directly affect their lives including decisions that shape the food systems. This amazing progress has been fuelled and accelerated by our willing partners who undertook the risk to invest in rural poor fisherfolks particularly the women.

Therefore, I cannot go without recognising the trust of our first partners: Ilse Schummer, through Friends of Uganda whose support put us on the global path to contribute to sustainable food systems. Another huge thank goes to the GIZ Responsible Fisheries Business Chains Projects under the Global Program Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture. They saw the need to scale up KWDT interventions in order to reach out to over 1,000 women

in fishing communities in Uganda. I am extraordinarily grateful and I appreciate all our partners whose cooperation has enabled us to deliver comprehensive development interventions including improvement of access to water, sanitation and hygiene, particularly in rural fisher communities who need these services the most.

I haven't found the right words to honour the rural and fisher women organised under Katosi Women Development Trust who have trusted me and my entire team at KWDT to follow them on their journeys of self-development. I appreciate them!

I would like to immensely thank my colleagues organised under the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers, (WFF) and the International Planning Committee on Food Sovereignty. Being part of a network of experts enabled me to endlessly pursue inclusive development anchored on a human rights based approach with specific human rights principles of equality, non-discrimination, empowerment, participation and attention to vulnerable groups as enshrined in the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the context of food security and poverty eradication.

I also thank FAO for the boundless collaboration with Civil Society Organization.

I use this opportunity to call for sustained cooperation in support of small-scale fisheries, particularly women who occupy more than 50 per cent of the post-harvest section of the fish value chain. The cooperation should offer options to small-scale fishing communities to reframe their strategies for attaining development, offer inclusive and diversified development approaches while promoting access to basic social services and advancing the protection of human rights; all key tenets of the SSF Guidelines. The long-term objective of the SSF Guidelines is to eradicate hunger and poverty. This award will inspire the women I work with, to continue to support food security and eradicate poverty in a sustainable environment. 🌱

Strong and resilient

Women's capacity for entrepreneurship calls for more opportunities in alternative livelihoods to be made available for women in the coastal villages of Kuching, Sarawak

By **Aazani Mujahid** (maazani@unimas.my), Senior Lecturer at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) and Malaysia's representative to the Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries, and Food Security (CTI-CFF) Women Leaders Forum, Malaysia

Coastal research in Sarawak, Malaysia, typically, does not target gender. Some projects have added gender-segregated data, but gender studies in fisheries generally remain unfunded. Given the difficulty of obtaining funding, gender scoping studies and needs analyses are rare. As a result, most women working in fisheries remain unidentified and unrecorded. In local culture, men's presence overpowers that of women. Many women marry young and bear children while still in their teens. There is even a case of a woman becoming a great grandmother at age 60.

In my research, I have focused on two coastal kampungs (villages) close to the state capital, Kuching. I found that, despite their subordinate social status, women in these villages were entrepreneurial on the domestic front, not only in fish processing and fish trading and selling but also in fishing. More than half of those surveyed had no formal education beyond the mandatory ages. However, these are resilient women – along a one kilometre stretch in one village, more than 20 women ran food businesses, including fisheries products, everyday snacks and durian products from 100-year-old durian trees. However, the women's businesses were dependent on middlemen for price and market information, and often the products were traded

through these intermediaries by the women's husbands as well.

COVID-19 has significantly impacted women's businesses. For example, half of the women in one village have had to reduce the time they can spend on their businesses by half. As a result, their incomes too have plummeted by half. However, living in transgenerational houses granted the families resilience through financial buffers and additional fishing labour created when some family members returned from working on farms or daily wage jobs.

What can be done to improve the women's opportunities in accessing economic resources for business or stable employment? For a start, the schooling for girls could be extended, giving them a better education base and building their knowledge and skills for later business success. Women's work must be included in laws, regulations and practical measures such as health and reproductive care. Currently, women's work is ignored. Women urgently need to be represented in the local economy, becoming partners in co-creating innovative solutions addressing socio-economic and environmental issues. In short, women and the community need to be at the heart, not the periphery, when engaging with local cultures, customs and the economy. ■

UNIMAS GAMIFICATION CENTRE



Co-organising a village clean-up as part of village community efforts towards environmental sustainability. Women urgently need to be represented in the local economy, becoming partners in co-creating innovative solutions addressing socio-economic and environmental issues

Engendering business

A business case for applying a gender lens in fisheries businesses

By **Caterina Meloni**
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In a business sense, fisheries and aquaculture are slotted in the category of food and beverage manufacturing. As in any other sector, investor demand and regulatory pressure are driving the growing push towards advancing gender diversity and inclusion and integrating it in companies' business models. This is because gender is critical to investments and their long-term prospects. It's about reducing risks over the life of the investment and opening up new opportunities to create value. Gender lens investing – which invests into women-owned businesses or businesses which focus on bringing benefits to women as consumers, employees or suppliers – is growing globally and in the region. Since 2017, the number of global funds with a gender lens has registered a 250 per cent growth, with a total of USD 6 billion worth of assets under management. Broadly, some investors are attracted by the positive link between gender and financial performance while others focus

on generating gender impact along their specific priority areas.

The COVID-19 pandemic has put a spotlight on social and gender risks and exacerbated gender gaps. Out of the 62 million workers who lost their jobs in the Southeast Asia and Pacific region in 2020, many were women who had to leave the workforce to meet increased family responsibilities. As the economies re-open, these are critical factors that businesses need to consider.

Diversity is viewed as important not only in attracting, retaining and growing an innovative and committed workforce but also in decision making roles in supervision, management and governance. It makes a business more resilient, better able to weather crises, and more importantly, better able to leverage new opportunities and meet the needs of a diverse customer base. For those companies that work closely with the community, there is no true 'social license to operate' without women. Failure

SIBASIS GUHA / ICAR-CIFT



Women working in a seafood processing factory in India. Businesses that are committed to strengthening gender diversity and inclusion should set ambitious but realistic goals



Aquaculture farmers at work. In a business sense, fisheries and aquaculture are slotted in the category of food and beverage manufacturing. Tracking and monitoring progress with robust data is thus an essential component of any diversity strategy

Businesses that are committed to strengthening gender diversity and inclusion should set ambitious but realistic goals


to consult women or provide robust health and safety guidelines for female employees and the community, including zero tolerance policies to prevent violence and harassment, can quickly compromise a company's reputation and their ability to effectively work in a certain place.

While the 'why' of diversity and inclusion is increasingly recognised, many ASEAN businesses find themselves now grappling with the 'how' to go about it – for example, how to build an internal pipeline of high-performing women to strengthen their leadership, how to support women in the workplace in a cost-effective and practical way that does not compromise overall performance, how to engage more women owned businesses in their supply chains. Globally, less than one per cent of procurement from large companies is from women owned businesses.

Connecting Founders takes a pragmatic approach in guiding businesses to advance diversity and inclusion based on their specific needs and goals, and at their own pace. A key aspect is breaking down complex issues to make them more accessible and practical for busy business owners and executives, supporting them step by step, and adjusting to course-correct if needed. This includes gap analyses to provide recommendations for action; designing gender and inclusion policies, accompanied by practical strategies and plans that set targets, budgets, timelines and responsibilities; and tracking and monitoring the outcomes.

The International Finance Corporation has published an insightful case study of its

work advising SolTuna, a tuna manufacturing company in the Solomon Islands, on how to better support its female employees. In 2017, the company introduced gender-smart workplace measures to help overcome employee retention and inconsistent work attendance among the 1,800 staff, 65 per cent of whom were women. As well as supporting women to rise into management roles, one focus of the work was to create better career opportunities by improving women's access to non-traditional jobs, such as those of forklift drivers and mechanics. As part of the absenteeism problem was due to women's financial and personal difficulties, the measures also included improving women's financial literacy, household budget management and life-planning skills. Gender based violence involving employees was addressed through training and by providing access to a safe house. The training contributed to significant improvements in financial attitudes and behaviour, increase in staff attendance at work and better financial outcomes for the business through increased productivity.

Businesses that are committed to strengthening gender diversity and inclusion should set ambitious but realistic goals. They need to be aware that advancing gender equality in the workplace or supporting diversity in their supply chain is not a linear process. It is a journey that will likely take longer than anticipated and might require tweaking and recalibration as the company learns from it. Tracking and monitoring progress with robust data is thus an essential component of any diversity strategy. 

Women and Labour in Fisheries 101

Recognising the lack of clarity and therefore consensus on basic terminology, this article attempts to define some common terms used in discussions around gender and labour in fisheries

By **Arlene Nietes**

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Towards a common understanding on gender and labour in fisheries, we define some basic terms commonly used when applying a gender lens to activities in fish value chains, fisheries statistics, policies, and interventions. These definitions recognise the work that women do in fisheries and may help responsible parties create opportunities, address needs and reduce and/or eliminate workplace vulnerabilities.

Let us begin with labour and terms commonly associated with labour.

Labour is the physical, mental, and social effort used to produce goods and services. It can also refer to those who work to produce goods and services, such as women, men, and other gender group categories.

Fair labour, just work and decent work refer to activities and initiatives that promote better working conditions for all people working in all nodes of the fisheries value chain, including addressing gender differentiated needs.

An **entrepreneur** is a person who, in producing goods and services, is prepared to lose money in order to make a profit.

Equitable means fair and reasonable treatment, according to the respective needs of women and men and other groups. This may include equal treatment, or treatment that is different but equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations, and opportunities – leading to substantive equality.

Inclusive refers to not excluding anyone who is involved in a fisheries activity and providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who could be marginalised.

Next, consider the various types of labour in fisheries and aquaculture.

A **value chain** is the whole set of activities, connections, and dealings taking place to transform a product and deliver it to consumers. Value chain is preferred to **supply chain** because the latter refers specifically to the steps in getting the product to the customer and not to the processes and relationships that add value to the

product along the way. Value chain activities are often grouped into major **nodes**, namely pre-production, production, post-harvest, trading and consumption.

We consider labour along the **whole of the value chain**, whereas many fisheries agencies focus on, and collect statistics for, just the production node (fishing and fish farming), ignoring the other labour which typically engages more people than that in the production node.

We also take a broad view of labour, including productive and reproductive labour.

Productive labour results in goods or services that have monetary value or the equivalent of it. This could be done by the employed, self-employed or even unemployed (informal sector or subsistence). This could also be paid, partly paid or underpaid, or even unpaid.

Reproductive labour involves anything that people have to do for themselves (associated with responsibilities of family care and household tasks), including community management and social activities. This includes birthing and raising children, household duties, caring for the elderly, community care, environmental care such as mangrove replanting and nurturing, and coastal clean-ups. These are mainly unpaid.

Who provides the labour in fisheries?

Many workers in small-scale fisheries businesses are **self-employed**. However, as operations grow in size, intensity and complexity, more workers may be hired, unless businesses opt for mechanisation, thereby reducing labour demand.

In both small-scale and larger businesses, the **local community** is one of the main sources of labour, wherein the local hires live in the same area as their workplaces. Some multinational companies even locate factories near sources of local labour.

Domestic and internal migrants who come from the host country but whose homes are outside the area of the workplaces also provide labour. Work such as fish processing factory jobs,

attracts people from poorer areas with fewer economic opportunities. For example, Thais from rural and poor farming areas come for factory work near cities, e.g., the Samut Sakhon fish processing areas near Bangkok. In India and Bangladeshi seafood processing factories, young women workers come from other states (India) or districts (Bangladesh).

Another source is **cross-border migrants** or **foreign workers**. These could be long-term legal workers, or itinerant, illegal or irregular workers.

The 2018 International Labour Organization (ILO)-European Union (EU) study of migrants in the seafood industry in Thailand (Ship To Shore Rights Project) reported that in 2017, out of the 600,000 workers in the fishing and seafood processing sectors, 302,000 were registered migrant workers. The number of unregistered migrants was not known. A survey of 434 workers found that 73 per cent of men and only 48 per cent of women received the minimum wage or more. Unregistered workers would be even less likely to receive the minimum wage.

All people migrating to work, whether internally or across borders, suffer social and

cultural dislocations, having to live away from their usual households and communities, often in shared accommodation associated with work. These dislocations are also highly gendered in their impacts.

Recent statistics on how many people work in fisheries were reported by FAO's 'State of the World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2020 Report' and the 'Hidden Harvests Report 2012' (HH). FAO and HH reported that 116 million (or 97 per cent) of the 120 million fisheries workers were in developing countries. Of these, more than 90 per cent work in small-scale fisheries, 47 per cent of this workforce consists of women and 73 per cent of fishers and fishworkers live in Asia.

The poor state of global and national gender-disaggregated data has been recognised, including the lack of data on how women and men are involved along the fishery value chains. Furthermore, the existing statistics refer only to paid labour.

In November 2021, experts working on FAO's Illuminating Hidden Harvest (IHH) for Small-Scale Fisheries project provided an update of the HH study, reporting that 113 million

ARLENE NIETES SATAPORNVANIT



Fisherwomen at work. Work such as fish processing factory jobs, attracts people from poorer areas with fewer economic opportunities. Thais from rural and poor farming areas come for factory work near cities

people work in small-scale and subsistence fisheries globally, of which 45 million or 40 per cent are women (paid or unpaid). Furthermore, women comprise 15 percent of workers in the pre-harvest node (gear fabrication/repair, boat building), 19 per cent in commercial harvest (vessel and non-vessel based work), and 50 per cent in post-harvest (processing, transporting, trading, selling and related activities). Women also represent 45 per cent in subsistence fishing. Women are underreported in informal and unpaid activities, including in subsistence fishing such as gleaning or foot fishing and other informal activities that support fisheries businesses and operations.

The term **gender divisions of labour** or GDL, refers to how work is assigned or divided according to the gender of the workers. Some GDL are strong in fisheries. GDL can result in inequality and may facilitate or allow for unequal treatment, disparity in wages and opportunities for advancement.

GDL may arise from several, not mutually exclusive, causes.

Social norms may prescribe or proscribe what work women and men should do. These include gender stereotypes and gender prohibitions (taboos) for certain jobs. For instance, women are not allowed on fishing boats because this is considered bad luck, or only women are responsible for household chores and childcare, which leads to a double burden for women who also work outside the household.

Stereotypes may be based on gender and also on race, age, physical features and capacities, leading to multiple sources of disadvantage and discrimination. In some societies, specifications of skill (skilled or unskilled) and educational levels could determine the level of job one is given.

Women's work is often valued at less than that of men, even if it is the same type. When the work done by women differs from that done by men, **labour cost structures** often result in women workers getting the lower paying jobs. For example, a 2017 ILO survey of seafood migrant workers in Thailand found that men were paid USD 25 more than women each month, on average. Gender differences in labour pay rates, therefore, may be due to women and men performing different types of work or receiving different pay rates for the same work, or both.

Competing productive and reproductive work creates stresses. Often, women are expected to bear the load of care, volunteer for community activities, and at the same time

conduct productive work. Large reproductive workloads can greatly diminish the time available to conduct productive work.

Structural work factors, such as work schedules and flexibility in arrangements may also be gendered. Women are often at a disadvantage and could miss out on opportunities due to perceptions that they should not work at night, or when they get married or pregnant. Women lose opportunities to do the jobs they prefer or are trained for when these issues affect decisions of employers.

Clearly, labour policies and institutions have a vital role to play in correcting gender asymmetries.

At every level of governance from the international to the local, agencies work on labour matters, develop guidelines, provide resources such as funding, convene meetings and dialogues, and enforce laws. These tasks focus mainly on paid labour, and not all are gender sensitive or responsive.

At the international level, ILO is the main agency working on labour. ILO works with tripartite constituents, from national to international – ministries of labour, workers, and employers' organisations. Other organizations to some extent include the FAO, the International Maritime Organization, the International Organisation for Migration, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN Commission on the Status of Women, the European Union and the United States Agency for International Development.

Nationally, fisheries labour is the responsibility of the departments of labour and social welfare, whereas other agencies (fisheries, women and children, and law enforcement) may be called to collaborate.

Some NGOs, labour and trade unions, workers' representatives, charities and religious organisations provide support to seafarers and fish workers, and often are their voices to the world.

The private sector has business representative bodies, from small-scale workers, for example, the Self-Employed Women's Association (India), to big business groups, for example, Seafood Business for Ocean Stewardship, as well as certification bodies.

Collaboration and coordination work on fisheries labour among these agencies and groups varies from country to country. ■

Saying no to forced labour

In communities and families, women bear the brunt of the negative impacts of men's forced labour on fishing vessels

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A recent project revealed that the exploitation of men's labour on fishing vessels is central to certain fishing practices in Asia, including forced labour and trafficking in persons. The project, Safeguarding Against and Addressing Fishers' Exploitation at Sea (SAFE Seas) was carried out by PLAN International at sites in Indonesia and the Philippines to improve understanding of what constitutes forced labour and trafficking, and how to remedy labour abuses. Women and men in fishing families were engaged in the project to help increase their ability to recognise and report labour exploitation.

Typically, work related to overcoming labour exploitation at sea does not include women but, given the serious impact of such exploitation on families and communities, this project not only recognised but also drew upon the potential of women to speak up and act against forced labour. In General Santos City and Sarangani Province (Philippines), 20 per cent of women surveyed had husbands or sons who experienced work abuse; 15 per cent revealed that they had experienced such abuse but failed to report it for fear of job loss while 5 per cent of those surveyed were not aware of what constituted abuse. The 20 per cent who had experienced labour abuse mentioned financial penalties forced on them such as the withholding of their salary, being forced to work overtime to pay off debts, and having to

personally bear the cost of medical treatment for work-related accidents and injuries.

When husbands and sons experienced labour abuse at sea, women themselves experienced a range of negative impacts, such as increased stress, having to take on extra work to make ends meet and shouldering debt burdens. Women typically manage the household finances and so they tended to take the lead in borrowing money for the family, often at exorbitant rates. Further negative impacts included children having to drop out of school and girls marrying young.

Gender norms determine the roles women perform in the family, society and industry, including unpaid or underpaid productive work. Despite these strictures, women may have considerable influence at the community and local government levels, advocating for local government to act on labour violations. When women are educated on labour rights, they are better prepared to fight for these rights. It is also often the case that men returning from sea are not interested in going to meetings to address these issues.

By examining women's roles in relation to local forced fishing labour, this study revealed that the families, through the women, also need better financial services, including affordable loans, social protection programmes and the development of livelihood opportunities and skills. ■

KRISTINE VILLANUEVA / PLAN INTERNATIONAL



When husbands and sons experienced labour abuse at sea, women themselves experienced a range of negative impacts, such as increased stress, having to take on extra work to make ends meet and shouldering debt burdens

Gender in voluntary standards for the seafood industry

The Asian Seafood Improvement Collaborative (ASIC) and its partners have developed a voluntary social and gender standard for the small-scale fisheries and aquaculture sector

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USA

Between 10 and 12 per cent of the world's population depends on fisheries and aquaculture for their livelihoods and nutrition. In the past decade, investigative reports have exposed the human rights violations pervasive throughout seafood supply chains, ranging from wage theft and illegal recruitment fees, inadequate health and safety protections, to violence, abuse and even murder. These issues undermine the resilience of seafood supply chains, but more importantly, they threaten the lives and well-being of families and communities working in the sector. Without adequate protection and enforcement measures, workers throughout supply chains are vulnerable to exploitation and human rights abuses. It has become increasingly important to develop innovative tools and approaches that protect the rights of workers and producers, and that amplify their voices.

The risks of exploitation and opportunities for success in the seafood industry are also gendered as men and women occupy different spaces in the supply chain. Estimates suggest that women represent nearly half of all workers in the fisheries and aquaculture sector, with 85 per cent of those workers being located in Asia. Yet to this day, most industry and government initiatives are gender-blind, meaning that they do not consider the social, political, cultural and economic differences between men and women that impact their outcomes and opportunities. This is particularly dangerous since many women working in the seafood sector occupy unpaid, underpaid and/or unrecognised roles with little visibility and decision making power.

Data tells us that while men perform most of the primary fishing and aquaculture production, women contribute vital time and labour across all nodes of the value chain and contribute most of the labour in pre- and post-harvest activities. Women represent the majority of workers in processing plants and face various risks, including exorbitantly low wages, unsuitable health and safety measures, as well as sexual and gender based violence and harassment.

Similarly, despite common perceptions of a male-dominated industry, women often contribute to primary production, completing tasks including pond stocking and feeding,

operating ventilators, and increasingly through fishing activities both on and off vessels. However, since most of this work is done in small, family-run farms and/or fishing operations, women's contributions are largely ignored and undervalued. This contributes to the unequal division of labour, as women often work more hours (particularly unpaid hours) per day than men and have less leisure time. At a broader scale, ignoring women's contributions to primary production can also result in the marginalisation of women from natural resource management and decision making forums, from training and extension services, and from access to credit and income generating opportunities, which further exacerbates inequalities.

While the sustainable seafood movement has rallied against egregious human and labour rights abuses through the development of certifications, codes of conduct, and non-profit partnerships, there remains a glaring omission in the majority of these tools. Despite the vital presence of women in seafood production, most existing standards and improvement tools do not account for the gender-specific risks and barriers facing women in the sector. While some standards include non-discrimination criteria, these indicators often minimise gender equality as a goal and do not address the obstacles that women face in global supply chains. These inequalities include the unequal distribution of unpaid care and domestic work, unequal access to resources, gender based violence and harassment, and the lack of representation in leadership positions. As a result, gender-blind interventions at best perpetuate existing gender inequities, and at worst actively contribute to keeping women invisible and devaluing their work. This situation puts women at risk of further marginalisation and exploitation, and excludes them from equally benefitting from fishery and aquaculture resources.

In recognition of the need to include and account for women in social sustainability initiatives, the Asian Seafood Improvement Collaborative (ASIC) partnered with Oxfam under the Gender-Transformative and Responsible Agribusiness Investments in Southeast Asia (GRAISEA) project to develop a voluntary social and gender standard for



Hasmia, a shrimp farmer in Pinrang, South Sulawesi, Indonesia is checking the salinity in her pond to ensure optimal growing conditions

The standard includes eight fundamental principles which seek to address pressing human and labour rights challenges in the industry

the small-scale fisheries and aquaculture sector. Primarily designed as an improvement programme, ASIC's standards aim to support small-scale farmers, fisheries, and processing facilities to improve working conditions in their operations.

The standard includes eight fundamental principles which seek to address pressing human and labour rights challenges in the industry. Gender equality, women's empowerment, and social inclusion were mainstreamed throughout the standard. Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment was named as the fifth principle in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals and to foreground it as a goal worthy of attention in and of itself.

When mainstreaming gender throughout the standard, consideration was given to the particular needs and barriers facing women and girls at all stages of seafood supply chains. This means that all goals and criteria were evaluated through a gender lens in order to ensure that the content and intentions promote equality, inclusion, and empowerment. For example, the standard requires that operations and producer groups provide child-care services during all training, workshops, meetings, and other group activities. This is to facilitate women's participation by recognising the restrictions on their time imposed through unpaid care

work. Similarly, it is required that all worker committees, unions, or other elected groups in the workplace be representative of the workforce, including women, migrant workers, and other marginalised populations. There are additional criteria that are further designed to promote a gender-responsive work environment. These include minimum requirements for paid maternity leave, the provision of nursing rooms and nursing breaks, the prohibition of inquiries into marital status or family planning, as well as a ban on all forms of sexual violence and a responsive, equitable, and accessible grievance and remediation procedure.

In addition to addressing risks to women and girls during paid and unpaid work, this standard also focuses on improvement to encourage participants to go above and beyond by integrating gender equality and women's empowerment into their core business practices. As an improvement oriented standard, participants are supported to pursue a second tier of recognition called ASIC Leader. To achieve this recognition, participants must implement activities that earnestly support empowerment, opportunity, and well-being in their communities. This includes executing gender-transformative projects, such as by providing and encouraging the use of paid paternity leave, providing paid leave as well as legal and medical support to workers experiencing domestic violence, paying all workers a living wage, and supporting educational opportunities for girls in their communities.

ASIC's standards are currently being piloted with multiple processors and small-scale shrimp farming cooperatives in Indonesia. Already, there has been significant market interest from buyers in North America and Europe to support seafood products that promote social responsibility, community resilience, and women's empowerment. Consumers are increasingly concerned with equity and sustainability, and their purchasing habits are reflecting this trend. To meet consumer demand and support the livelihoods of seafood producing communities, the sustainable seafood movement must adopt a holistic approach that prioritises equity and inclusion. This means embracing collaboration and championing worker and producer driven initiatives. It requires that all members of this movement go beyond corporate policies and codes of conduct to form effective partnerships across supply chains that meaningfully engage all participants in processes to uphold the rights of women and girls, promote gender equality, and foster long-term prosperity. ■

Reflections on Women and Fisheries Labour

A range of critical issues confront women in small-scale fisheries, the most basic being the under-recognition of women's contributions

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Since the 1990s, there has been an increased awareness that women do fish. However, there still is a deep-seated perception that “real” fishing is done by men while women merely play a supportive role. Such under-recognition of women's work stems from the invisibility of women's contribution to fisheries.

Many gender-sensitive researchers studying fisheries have highlighted the invisibility of women and the under-valuation of women's contribution in fisheries. First of all, the problem stems from the fact that very little data is gender disaggregated. Second, fisheries data focuses on men's activities, and often do not record activities that women are concentrated in, such as gleaning, catching fish in small traps and processing for home consumption. There is still a strong perception that men are the fishers and women are home-makers. Third, time use difference of women and men can lead to invisibility of women's contribution to fisheries. Although women fish, the length of time that they can spend on fishing can be less than men, since they need to look after household work, care for the children and often tend the backyard garden for household food security. Such time restrictions limit the places that women can go for fishing. Still there are women who spend considerable amounts of time fishing, but again, because of general perceptions, they are not seen as fishers. Fourth, the type of fishing that women do is often invisible. Women's fishing activities are often seen as an extension of household work, catching fish for home consumption and gleaning in between their household responsibilities. Such form of fishing contributes to the perception that women are not fishing since these are part of their unpaid family work.

However, the efforts by women fishers and gender-sensitive researchers and practitioners have helped to highlight women's roles and contribution. Gender disaggregated data counting the number of women and men fishers and showing large numbers of women engaged in fishing, is beginning to be made available. The value chain approach has highlighted the role that women play as retailers and processors, as well as their role in non-fisheries work that supplements the family income from fisheries and allows the family to continue to rely on fishing as their livelihood. There are projects that helped improve fish processing techniques and introduced certification schemes so that women's groups are able to access niche, or better, markets. There are also more studies on women workers in fish processing factories and their working conditions. Women's groups have come

together to demand support from government after the occurrence of disasters even as their governments only supported men's fishing activities through providing boat and gears. However, data collection mechanisms as well as budget allocation by governments have still not substantially changed in ways that recognize women's fisheries work on par with those of men.

One of the difficulties in systematically addressing women's contribution in fisheries is the diversity of women's involvement. What women do and how they are involved in fisheries is context specific and differs by location, age, ethnicity, education level, by season and by the stage of life they are in. Therefore, it is essential to include all these circumstantial factors in the analysis. The intersectional disadvantage of certain groups of women also needs to be taken into consideration. Women in female-headed households might face a greater disadvantage than do women in male-headed households since the former do not have enough labour to benefit from fisheries. It is also recognized that women's groups are not a panacea for all circumstances, though they are useful and effective under certain situations. Some women are not able to join women's groups. Some might not join because they do not need to while others cannot because do not have enough resources in terms of time and money. Further, power relations and benefits can be unequally distributed within the group.

The most popular strategy to integrate women into fisheries projects is to improve participation of both women and men in project activities. Fishing organizations are notoriously male dominated. In many cases, especially when membership is household based, it is the men who are fishing organization members. Organizational membership can sometimes lead to benefits such as access to loans and information, as well as direct access to governments in terms of their collective issues as fishers. Women are often excluded from this formal mechanism. However, improving women's participation is not as simple as just including them as members in the fishing organizations. Participation is guided by gender norms, and thus the strategies to increase women's quality participation needs to be different from place to place. Women need to be seen not as victims but as citizens and treated as such. They need to be given the space for themselves to air their opinion and make decisions.

COVID-19 has created some opportunities for women in fisheries. Women selling processed fish products were able to benefit from the expanded online market during the pandemic. However, several negative aspects have also



Fishes caught from the rice fields system support the livelihoods of many Cambodian communities. Selling fish at homeplace has a direct impact on families income generation

Under-recognition of women's roles stems from the invisibility of women's contribution to fisheries

been noted. The setback to the tourism sector has affected many women who were selling fish or processed fish products to tourists. Women who worked in tourism-related activities in coastal and riverside areas lost their customers. With the general economy going through crisis, women fish vendors face many difficulties selling fish since their customers are often in the lower income brackets. The disruption in logistics has made it difficult for women fish vendors to access buyers who will transport fish to other areas. The pandemic has also hit the fish processing factories where women work in numbers, and many have lost their jobs.

Aside from the fishing-related damage, women's workloads at home have increased due to school closures and men not being able to work outside the home. Looking after family members and children's education has increased the pressure on women's time. If one of the family members gets sick, women's time is further squeezed as they need to serve as care takers of the sick family members. Women get less access to government subsidies under the pandemic, since they work in the informal economy and are not eligible for such subsidies.

Labour migration is an important issue in gender and fisheries as well. Cross border migrant workers, especially Burmese and Cambodian migrant workers working in Thailand are often not originally from the fishing communities. They come to Thailand to work with low wages and with little by way of local networks. Their working conditions can often be vulnerable and precarious. Often, both husband and wife travel together. While the husband works on the boat, women are engaged as hired workers in fish

processing. Women's choice of work is further limited since they are forced to stay near the port to wait for their husbands.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a particularly harsh impact on these migrant workers. Some lost their jobs; some left Thailand fearing the pandemic since Thailand suffered the spread of the disease earlier than in Cambodia or Myanmar. Some remained but were left in a precarious situation since restrictions in mobility made it difficult for them to go anywhere. The Thai government issued several stay extension provisions for migrant workers which allowed registered migrant workers to extend their stay. However, new registrations did not take place, and those who missed the registration deadline remained undocumented. Workers who went back to home countries during the initial months of the pandemic wanted to return to Thailand but the pandemic made it even harder for them to cross the border. While both women and men migrant workers faced such difficulties, women migrants tended to be less likely to return back to work because their responsibilities in their home countries had increased with the pandemic. Women-dominated workplaces such as factories also were affected more by the pandemic, hence women lost more jobs.

With the pandemic subsiding, will migrant women and men be able to have a better say and more negotiation power now that the employers have experienced the difficulties with a lack of migrant workers? Will women in fisheries be able to further expand their new markets that they have found during the pandemic? All of these remain to be seen. ■

ICSF Archives/Digital library

Women in fisheries form half the workforce in the sector and perform multidimensional roles. ICSF's *Yemaya*, a unique newsletter, has been in the forefront publishing regularly on women and gender issues in the fisheries sector. At a time when information overload causes crucial matters to be sidelined, *Yemaya* has provided much needed visibility to the challenges facing the women from fishing communities as well as their organisational efforts and initiatives in overcoming challenges.

All articles that have been published in *Yemaya* can be quickly searched by author or title or keyword in the ICSF Digital Library (www.icsfarchives.net). But it is not just *Yemaya* that is available here. ICSF's Archives/Digital library contains ICSF's collections of more than three decades, built up since ICSF's documentation centre was set up in Chennai in 1999 with the twin objectives of gathering all kinds of information pertinent to small-scale fisheries and making it available to all stakeholders in an easy and rapid-access format. Currently the digital archive has over two thousand original documents and more than 12,000 curated links.

The archive's papers are listed under the following major themes related to fisheries: Aquaculture, Biodiversity, Decent Work, Disasters and Climate Change (including COVID-19), Fisheries Trade, Gender in Fisheries and Aquaculture, Right to Resources (including access rights and tenure) and SSF Guidelines.

Sources for information and material are diverse and range from peer-reviewed journals, scholarly books, conference reports, newsmagazines, websites and databases to governmental and multilateral agencies, fishery and fishworker organisations, non-governmental and civil society organisations and researchers. The issues addressed by the resources held in ICSF's archives are globally pertinent to ICSF's mandate, which includes women in fisheries.

The digital world is marked by information overload. This is why the Search function becomes important. The website's Search function is easy to use – for example, typing 'gender' in the search box throws up over 400 results which can be sorted by year, author or title. The list can be exported in 15 formats. While many of the documents may be available in the ICSF repository to be downloaded, in other cases, the link (url) to the document held elsewhere is provided. The search can be refined to provide greater focus. Thus, if you want a list of documents that have both 'gender' and 'justice' in the title, the refined search throws up a very specific list.

Another example: with many coastal communities being pushed towards tourism, how easy is the transition? Search and find the papers that talk about these issues in different parts of the world – Nigeria, the Philippines, Amazonia – and compare their findings! Further, if you search women and tourism, you find that papers have been written, but not many, indicating that this is an area that perhaps needs looking into.

Also offered is a special collection of 'grey' publications – important case studies and reports which include unpublished or out-of-print material relating to fishing communities, demands of fishworkers organisations, fisheries policy, and fisheries trade and so on; many of them not easily found outside the ICSF archive.

The collections are stored in both virtual 'soft' copies and in 'hard' print copies. The dissemination is in the form of soft copies to users. The digitisation is an ongoing process and new documents are added regularly to the database. All ICSF publications are available in the archives, including the triannual publications SAMUDRA Report and *Yemaya*, as well as monographs and dossiers, infographics and films pertinent to fisheries issues.

How would such an archive help fishworker organisations, especially women in fisheries? Information is power and access to the right information helps in articulating positions, perhaps finding answers too. The dynamic and interactive design of the digital archive makes it easy and hence attractive to use as it is accessible from anywhere in the world.

Visit the archive at www.icsfarchives.net 📄

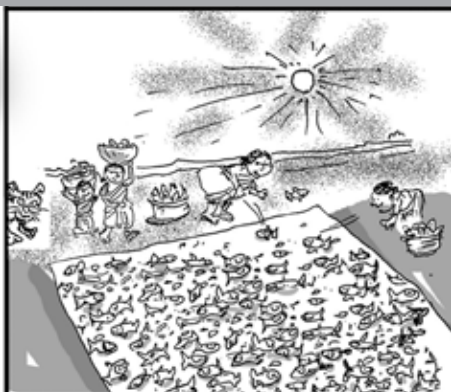
What's New, Webby?



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YEMAYA MAMA

"Mama's view of Women's Day!"



BOOK

The Island of Sea Women: A Novel by Lisa See, 2019

384 pages

Simon & Schuster Ltd, New York,
ISBN: 978 1 5011 54867

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“Every woman who enters the sea, carries a coffin on her back. In this undersea world we tow the burdens of a hard life. We are crossing between life and death every day.” Sun-Sil, Chief Haenyo of the diving collective in Hado, Jeju, speaks these words while preparing Young-Sook and her diving partner Mi-Ja as they take their first dive as Hagun (baby divers) with their collective. These traditional words uttered before dives, foreshadow and echo sorrowfully through the novel *The Island of Sea Women* by Lisa See; whose latest novel explores the world of haenyeo, the women free divers of Jeju Island. Armed with their training, which begins in girlhood, and supported by their collective these women free dive up to 30 metres, even in freezing waters of 1°C (even through pregnancy and childbirth!) to fish for sea urchins, shellfish, abalone, sea grasses and octopus.



See's novel centres around two young haenyeo – Young-Sook and Mi-Ja – from their childhood in 1938 to their present day lives in 2018. Foregrounding this relationship and weaving through it, the novel explores the haenyeo community and the intricate ties between women as well as the momentous historical arenas of Japanese imperialism, World War 2,

The Jeju Uprising and the Korean War.

There have been numerous studies conducted on the haenyeo, focussing on their culture and shamanistic practices, their matrifocal society, their methods and systems of governance and management of marine resources and the scientific marvel of their diving capabilities. As Jeju's tourism industry flourished and became one of the mainstays

of their economy, the haenyeo were also promoted as the 'mermaids' of Jeju. See's work is an immersive experience which firmly places a reader in the midst of their lived realities. It goes beyond deftly illustrating these aspects of life and shares a uniquely insightful perspective into the haenyeo community and their lived experiences. The narrative also explores tenure rights and transfers, traditional knowledge, governance systems, sustainable use practices as well as the rise and decline of haenyeo and their fishery.

Scenes with collective bantering while preparing or winding down from a dive are delightful as the divers exchange comments from their husband's childrearing skills to their own phenomenal bravery, courage and skills. Revelling in their economic independence, decision making capacities and self-worth, these bubbles of feminist comradeships and communities are held in stark contrast to the wider patriarchal society within which they exist and which ultimately wreaks havoc in Jeju.

The novel brings to light the leadership and courage of haenyeo in the 1930s during the period of Japanese imperialism. One of the largest ever fisher struggles led by women against exploitative Japanese practices in 1932, it is also considered to be one of the most influential parts of the resistance movement. The reader experiences this movement through the perspectives of the young protagonists which adds another fascinating and emotive layer. The value of the movement transitions from being solely outcome based and focusses instead on the power it holds for the young peoples within the community itself. One that extends far beyond the day of the march itself and plays out across their lives.

Ultimately, this is sweeping narrative exploring the complex and tenacious bonds between women and the backlash of sorrow, rage and grief experienced when those bonds are broken. The trauma that ripped through Jeju in during the late 1940s is mirrored in the protagonist's journeys. Healing requires recognition and reparations that extend beyond this narrative and can apply to our increasingly fractured world and fisheries at large. 🐟



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contributors to YEMAYA, please
note that 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
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