

Inclusive development from a gender perspective in small scale fisheries

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Gender inequality and discrimination challenges the social economic and environmental sustainability of the global small-scale fisheries sector critically in achieving inclusive development. The absence of a gender-aware perspective in fisheries research is often justified from the premise that fisheries are a male-dominated sector. Although, millions of women are engaged in small-scale fisheries their work has been systematically discounted and devalued. This paper reviews the gender literature on small-scale fisheries to elaborate on the gender discrimination on; labor division, accessibility, and power relations, which hinder the sustainability and development process in marginalized communities. Ironically, women often contribute to such discriminatory processes in access and control of resources and decision making thus directly affecting on household and community wellbeing. The paper concludes that gender sensitive research can help to ensure that the conditions for achieving the sustainable development goals are met especially in the context of expected global stress on fisheries from climate change and development processes.

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Introduction

As a contribution to this Special Issue on Inclusive Development and its disciplinary and thematic roots, this paper examines the literature on gender issues in inclusive development in the small scale fisheries sector mainly

focusing on gender division and discrimination. Equitable sharing of economic returns, social wellbeing, ecological sustainability and power equalities [see Pouw and Gupta, this issue] are crucial for the resource based primary industries [1,2] like fisheries with critical gender implications [3,4]. Gender refers to ‘behaviors learned through the socially prescribed roles of women and men, which are diverse and dynamic’ [5^{**}:5]. As a social construct, gender defines women’s and men’s behavior, relations, capabilities, resource distribution, and social expectations appropriate to their social institutions [6^{**}]. Thus, integrating a gendered socio-economic, ecological, and political approach is imperative for inclusive development outcomes for marginalized resource users [1,7,8] like small scale fishers. Small-scale fisheries, often considered as a male dominated industry, [5^{**},9,10,11^{**}] include women in invisible roles [9] but also as ‘everybody’s business’ [12^{*}:54]. Although, few studies acknowledge the hidden roles and contribution of fisherwomen in small scale fisheries [9,10,12^{*}] many of the gender neutral research, statistics, and policy documents [11^{**},13^{**},14] make male contributions visible and/or women’s contribution subsumed under male contributions or ignored [5^{**},12^{*},13^{**},14–16], resulting a significant quantitative data gap. In fact, a meaningful gendered analysis that captures the different fishing-related activities of women is difficult [5^{**}].

We reviewed literature on small scale fisheries as it hosts over 90 percent of the total fishing population in the world with the contribution from both male and female than the large scale — industrial fishery but often poorly regulated and documented with many unresolved complex management issues [17]. Gender, as a key variable in fisheries management [16,18–21] and research [5^{**}] enable the analysis of (a) community member functions [22]; (b) social production [23^{**}]; (c) gender interactions [24]; (d) social systems and role divisions in promoting food security [25–27]; and (e) livelihoods [4,9,10,11^{**},12^{*},18–20] motivated to evaluate the importance of a gendered approach in inclusive development to overcome the gender differentiation and discrimination which is usually not on fisheries policy agendas and in action plans but demanding a stronger conceptual foundation and application [28].

Key trends in the literature

Millions of women are engaged in small-scale fisheries, but ‘invisible’

Although, 56 million women world-wide are directly involved in small scale fisheries based income generation

Table 1

Gender division in small scale fisheries			
Category	Female fishers	Male fishers	Related articles
Fishing ground	Near shore fishing <i>Choices depend on accessibility, ability to attend home affairs, severity of the fishing operation due to weather, available opportunities, scale of operations</i>	Off shore fishing	[4,5**,20,25,28,29,36,37]
Target fish	Mostly invertebrates <i>Choices depend on accessibility, ecosystem, value, quantity, fishing technology, scale of operations</i>	Mostly on fin fish and valuable invertebrates	[4,14,28,35,37,38–40]
Work	Less risky <i>Choices depend on fishing technology, distance from the shore, sea condition, responsibilities, obligations, working conditions</i>	More risky	[25,37]
Income	Main/Supplementary <i>Depends on fishing duration, culture, household condition (male/female headed, marital status), quantity, household economy, vulnerability, policy changes</i>	Main	[11**,23**,31,41]
Engagement	Pre and post harvesting <i>Depends on home affairs, demographic factors (age, marital status, and age of children) commitment, working hours, culture, safety</i>	Basically harvesting	[4,5**,9,12*,29,32]
Fishing time	Day time <i>Depends on home affairs, child caring, weather, dedication, economy, safety, culture</i>	Both day and night	[29,42]
Relationships in the governing system	Poor	Good	[10,11**,13**]
<i>Mostly male officers govern the fishing institutions and communication process</i>			

*Compiled by authors, texts in *italics* are implied from the literature.

[17,24] their role is invisible, unrecognized, undervalued, and underrepresented [4,23**,29] not only in the Global South but also in North [9,10,30,31] where they are acknowledged as only fulfilling household tasks [31,32]. Most of the women are engaged in unpaid or poorly paid [28], less capital intensive, minor jobs [15,33] such as fish vending, net mending, cleaning (fish and equipment), dry fish processing (salting, fermenting, and drying) [4,23**,31], trading [29], and petty trading on the beach [12*] and many more. Women also engage in capture fishing [9,10] and dangerous fishing activities like diving [34] without much recognition and acknowledgment as fishermen. Hence, often fishermen are considered as the primary breadwinner and fisherwomen as the primary caregiver [31,34] although women's role is far more beyond [16,23**,34,35]. Table 1 reveals the gender division in small scale fisheries with supportive literature to illuminate the involvement of fisherwomen and fishermen in fishing operation that makes women's role visible for analysis.

Women's role beyond direct fishing

Fisherwomen also undertake usual tasks like household upkeep, child care, earning a livelihood, socio-cultural activities, resource conservation [35], and psycho-social support for fishermen [12*,24,30,31,42] which are also under-recognized [21] but creditable. Women's contribution can ease economic crises in households [39] from policy changes, commercialization [25], ecological stress, and dwindling fish catch [43], by searching for alternative income sources in or outside the fisheries sector [9,10].

Role of fisherwomen also extends as investors, sources of credits, and decision makers on family food consumption [17].

Gendered discrimination

The article would address three types of gendered discriminations; (a) restriction on access; (b) restriction on decision making; and (c) identity based discrimination.

Restriction on access: Access to means of production is also gendered [12*,44,45]. Although, some women have primary access to the resources most of the fisherwomen are restricted hence secondary or tertiary access to fish is permitted with diverse notions, challenges, and obstacles [11**]. Most of the widowed, divorced, or single women in Lake Victoria (Kenya [33], and Tanzania [42]) use transactional sex to access fishing grounds and also to survive in the male-dominated fisheries sector. More often, women, especially young widows or those with disabled husband are susceptible to sexual harassment [9,23**,33,42] in exchange for access to fisheries and fisheries markets.

Restrictions on participation in decision making: Limited opportunities in administration [15,16,42], relegation to non-leadership positions, and male dominance in managerial positions show the gendered biasness in certain fisheries [9,34,45] where power relations are skewed toward men [35] leaving women without decision making power [9,10,15,29]. Lack of control and representation in fisheries organizations and negligence in decision making process affect badly on gender equity creating disparities

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