



SDG 14 will never be attained if 50% of the population it affects is not taken into consideration

SDG 5 the United Nations goal that encompasses gender equality and women's empowerment is far from being met in the fisheries environment. It has been so far dramatically overlooked by private and public stakeholders. The focus of the fisheries expert communities is on Sustainable Development Goal 14 – Life Below Water – and this is one that has no gender-specific targets. This complex subject and its ability to contribute to sustainability and be affected by it, are largely misunderstood. Thus in preparation to this conference we wish to share with you the key elements of the role of gender equality in a “sustainable blue economy”.

Marine Resource Mismanagement

- **Wrong marine resource diagnosis**
 - Fishing activities led by women are often ignored and not recognised so that their fishing effort is not taken into account in fisheries management, they are not counted in fishing statistics and their knowledge is not incorporated in the diagnoses. Little effort is being made at national and international levels to remedy the very poor state of sex-disaggregated statistics.
 - Marine resource decisions are mainly made based on information for the production segment of the value chain, ignoring the strong drivers in the pre-harvest and post-harvest segments, which also are the segments where women work.
- **Wrong economic assessment**
 - Invisible unpaid or underpaid auxiliary work allows fishing activities by men to continue even when the activity is not profitable (mending nets, net making, administration, selling); Women's labour can be considered as hidden subsidies.
 - Public policies and marine management tools are constructed in the absence of data describing the number of fishing women and their fishing effort and ignoring in most cases the level of their unpaid contribution,
- **Wrong uses of knowledge and intelligence**
 - Women in this business have expertise and information that are not utilised due to their absence during management policy making.
- **Wrong outcomes of decision-making**
 - Ignoring women's knowledge can result in inadvertently disadvantaging them when policy and management decisions are made, such as in assistance and adjustment measures and opportunities.
 - In the context of climate change, the adaptation challenge requires urgently a proper diagnosis and the involvement of the players so-far ignored, the women.

Gender Inequality in fisheries and aquaculture

- **Women do not enjoy equal conditions** and are slowed down when carrying out their work
 - Impediments to accessing inputs such as capital, bank loans, new technology and training.
 - Stereotypes and social norms and sometimes laws, prevent women from accessing some jobs, for example, fisherwomen are not recognized as professionals in many countries and cannot become members of professional organisations.

- Discrimination can prevent women from accessing high profile and well paid jobs in the seafood industry. Women represent at most 10% of board members, 1% of CEOs.
- Family burdens lie disproportionately on women shoulders where taking care of family members is time consuming and costly, leaving fewer resources for women's own work.
- Low wage jobs and significant gender pay gaps with men are common, as are cases where women work in fisheries service roles without remuneration.
- **Discriminations and violence:** Reports show that women, who occupy 90% of all jobs in the labour intensive seafood processing industry, commonly suffer discrimination, violence, sexual harassment and poor working conditions.

In view of these points, the social dimension of the fisheries industry is very far from reaching SDG 5.

What is needed first and foremost is an awareness that SDG 14 will not be attained if 50% of the population it affects is not taken into consideration. Gender must be embedded in all elements and targets of SDG 14.

What can FAO do to help gender equality in fisheries, necessary to reach SDG14?

- **Place gender on the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) agenda** and use the COFI meeting to develop a strategy for mainstreaming gender equality in FAO programmes and in statistics, policies and international instruments. FAO can build on, improve and extend its experience with the *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication* that does recognize the importance of gender equality.
- **Redesign fisheries and aquaculture data collection to encompass sex-disaggregated statistics for the whole of the fish value chain**, including those segments where women are most active.
- In fisheries, **reinvent the 25 year old Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries**, the world's most revered instrument guiding fisheries, to **incorporate gender equality**.

Beside the FAO, **every one of us attending this International Symposium on Fisheries Sustainability can play a part** in making sustainable fisheries inclusive of SDG5. If you want to participate to this movement, you can contact us.

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