Towards Gender Equality in Small-Scale Fisheries

Fish Forever’s Global Gender Strategy 2020-2025
Global Gender Strategy 2020-2025: Towards Gender Equality in Small-Scale Fisheries

Carlos Arango 2020

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Rare

Rare is the leading behavior change organization in conservation. Rare specializes in identifying proven locally-led solutions and work with partners and communities worldwide to bring these solutions to a regional and national scale.

FishForever

Fish Forever is Rare’s community-led solution to revitalize coastal marine habitats, such as coral reefs, mangroves and seagrasses, protect biodiversity, and secure the livelihoods of fisher households and their communities. It uses an innovative approach to address coastal overfishing—by empowering communities through clear rights, strong governance, local leadership, and participatory management—that protects essential fish habitat and regulates fishing activities.

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Introduction

The contribution of women to the economy and productive systems has been largely underestimated or disregarded, because many of these activities are outside the circuits of marketed goods and services, and thus their quantification is either difficult to measure or not a priority: unpaid care, domestic and productive work within the households does not involve a monetary transaction (Elson, 1998; Stuart, 2014). To address this global imbalance, the international development agenda points at the urgency of promoting gender equality to achieve sustainability both in development and conservation areas. A target under Sustainable Development Goal 5 - Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls aims to “undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws” (United Nations, 2015).

Women have systemic disadvantages because of an imbalance in power relations with men – a power relation that implies a hierarchy between women and men based on their gender. This hierarchy translates into less options for women to enjoy the life they value, because they have less access to resources that allow people to make decisions and choose what matters to them (Alkire, 2005). The systemic disadvantage of women exists in small scale fishing communities around the world.

In small-scale fisheries, women are often engaged in processing and selling fish. In some cases, women own boats and finance fishing operations that employ men and in other cases they conduct their own fishing. But in most cases, women face inequalities in terms of accessing resources, services, employment opportunities, taking part in decision-making, and other areas that control the current and future status of the fishery (FAO voluntary guidelines for small scale fisheries).

One driver for this situation in coastal fishing communities is that the extractive activity of fishing is dominated by men, but there is extensive evidence through quantitative and qualitative studies demonstrating that women play active roles in other critical areas of the fisheries system as a whole (FAO, 2018; Lentisco & Robert U., 2015; Tietze, 2016). The active role of women in coastal fishing can be observed in fish processing where (FAO, 2016) women make up to 90% of the processing, as well as in seafood trading and marketing where they represent about 60% of the total business in Asia and Western Africa. (FAO,2016).

The idea that men are the ones that fish is primarily based on the way statistics define, and thus report fishing activities (Lentisco & Robert U., 2015). A common problem that stems from and feed into this statistical invisibility is that programs, public policy, and interventions focus on the activity of fishing itself, rather than looking more holistically at the productive sector of the fishery as a whole which includes the capture, processing and sale of the fish and the support services required to sustain those activities. This bias on the target of “fishing” as an activity, rather than a “fishery” as a complex sector of the productive economy, cascades through the way programs are designed, how objectives are set, who are the beneficiaries and what incentives and activities are required.
Goals

In recognition of gender imbalances in coastal fishing communities and the international development agenda, Fish Forever developed this guidance document as the global gender strategy with the objective to promote gender equity in small-scale fisheries. With the support of local and regional authorities in accordance with national legislation, the objective of this strategy is to shift the attitudes and behaviors of fishers and community members, so that:

(1) women’s roles and contributions in fishing communities are recognized, strengthened and valued,
(2) both women and men are able to sustainably manage their fishery,
(3) the benefits of engaging in sustainable fisheries management are equitably shared.

This document presents Fish Forever’s approach to mainstream gender across implementing countries and the communities we work with. Country teams will develop specific implementation plans under this guiding strategy to include their unique socio-cultural contexts within the framework of their national legislation on gender.

Conceptual framework for the strategy

The following are the core gender concepts on which the strategy is based. See table 1.

<table>
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<th>Concept</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<td>Gender equity (objective)</td>
<td>The process of being fair to men and women, boys, and girls, and importantly the equality of outcomes and results. Gender equity may involve the use of temporary special measures to compensate for historical or systemic bias or discrimination. It refers to differential treatment that is fair and positively addresses a bias or disadvantage that is due to gender roles or norms or differences between the sexes. Equity ensures that women and men and girls and boys have an equal chance, not only at the starting point, but also when reaching the finishing line. It is about the fair and just treatment of both sexes that considers the different needs of the men and women, cultural barriers and (past) discrimination of the specific group. (UNICEF)</td>
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<td>Gender mainstreaming (strategy)</td>
<td>Integration of a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures and spending programs, with a view to promoting equality between women and men, and combating discrimination. (EIGE 2018).</td>
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Women empowerment (outcome) | Empowerment of women fishers and fisheries value chain actors is a process of developing a combination of expanded choice and strengthened voice (van Eerdewijk et al. 2017).

Gender equality (outcome) | Gender equality is when women and men enjoy equal rights, opportunities, and entitlements in civil and political life, in terms of access, control, participation and treatment. (FAO)

Sustainable development goal - SDG- 5 | Relevant targets:
5.5 Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life.
5A Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance, and natural resources, in accordance with national law
5B Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women

Promoting gender equity

To promote gender equity in fishing communities, rare staff and partners must have an understanding of gender and incorporate a gender aware approach. This includes both internally within the organization and externally with partners and stakeholder. From the administrative processes that precede and accompany field work to data collection and reporting at the end of the project. At the fishing community level, fishers, buyers, management bodies and community members are active participants in the definition of reserves, maps, and fisheries management plans as well as main actors in surveillance, monitoring and reporting fishery-related activities. Their engagement and adoption of gender aware activities is critical to achieve the desired outcome of sustainable fisheries where the role of women is recognized, their voice and experiences incorporated in the management plan of fisheries, and the benefits of engaging in such activities is equitably shared.

Outcomes

The two specific outcomes of the Global Gender Strategy are gender equality and women’s empowerment, which will occur when women have equal rights and opportunities as those of the men, their voices are heard and their ability to make choices is increased.

Fish Forever builds on a strong foundation around women’s empowerment (see references) and recognizes that
empowerment is both an outcome and a process and needs to start with and from women themselves. This process cannot be imposed top down. To promote the meaningful participation of women, and ensure their voices are heard and the choices they can make align with what they deem valuable, it is imperative to promote their empowerment together with the community. This entails also getting the community, and specifically the men in the community, into this process.

The process to empower women involves the interaction between the following three inter-related dimensions of resources, agency, and achievements: 1) Ensuring women’s ownership of and control over strategic material, social, and natural resources and means. 2) Strengthening women’s decision-making and broadening their alternatives from where to choose. 3) Working towards achievements that women deem valuable. See diagram 2.

Gender equality in small-scale fisheries seeks to improve the three dimensions of women empowerment by:

- Promoting the integration of women in the decision-making process of all aspects of a fishery by increasing their participation in fisheries management bodies to incorporate women’s perspectives and alternatives that are more inclusive.
- Increasing access and ownership of strategic resources using financial inclusion mechanisms and small enterprise development.
- Facilitating access to resources and participation in the decision-making process to ensure women can achieve their full potential as individuals and members of coastal fishing communities.
How to achieve gender equality and women empowerment in Fish Forever communities

Gender will be mainstreamed across the three areas of Fish Forever during the project implementation cycle:

1. **Fisheries profiling - Getting to know the communities during project baseline.** This entails developing a thorough understanding of gender relations, which includes gender division of labor, decision-making process, access to key resources and gender norms that influence small-scale fisheries. To achieve this, community profiling and baselining tools must incorporate a gender lens to understand the gender dynamics in the fishery. The following guiding questions should be used to facilitate the description and understanding of relevant gender relations within communities:
   
   i. What are women’s and men’s work in the fishing community? To what extent are these activities remunerated (if at all)?
   
   ii. What activities would women like to perform, but given their existing responsibilities, are unable to undertake?
   
   iii. What obstacles do women face to access resources, make decisions, and achieve their objectives in terms of their relationship with men?
   
   iv. What social and gender norms affect women and men to benefit from fisheries?
   
   v. How could women, men and the community contribute to the advancement of women’s rights in fisheries?

   A practical way of mapping out both women’s circumstances and potential for change is by matching the information about gender relations with a value chain analysis and a daily clock activity map. Value chain analysis describe production processes and identify how to improve productivity and returns for fishers and the fishing activity so that it is possible to place women’s unpaid and paid labor in “steps” of fishing production (pre-harvest, harvest, post-harvest processing and sale) to understand how women contribute from their labor specialization to the realization of the marketed production. The daily clock activity map shows how women are distributing their time to carry out daily activities. This visual representation of division of labor is useful to understand the workload of women split between the household and fishing support activities.

2. **Project design with gender aware interventions.** Information and data from fisheries profiling will be interpreted to support the design more gender aware activities including the behavior change campaigns, fisheries management plans, managed access + reserves (MA+R) design process, establishment of management bodies, value chain analysis, financial inclusion…etc. throughout the project cycle. The design of the activities must ensure that women and men have equal access to information (e.g., social marketing campaigns and stakeholder engagements), time and locations of meetings and activities are suitable (e.g., generally women are doing food preparation in the morning), decision-making (e.g., participatory processes and management bodies), and financial services (e.g., saving clubs) so that they can benefit equally from natural and common resources.

   Examples of activities to ensure equal access to information and the meaningful participation of women include:
Managed access design and reserve planning must include women’s perspective in terms of where they fish, what species are valuable for them or support their processing business, what they do with the fish, and how the design of the fishery affects them.

Fisheries management plan and fisheries management bodies must include the voice and experience of women in the community.

Surveillance and patrolling activities could be also done by women. However, care must be given to ensure that such participation does not increase their daily burden or personal risk.

Saving clubs and financial literacy activities should promote the participation of more women to increase their control over financial resources. These activities also double as safe spaces for women to discuss community issues.

Value chain analysis must integrate and make visible the role of women in adding value to fish.

3. **Monitoring and evaluation - gender aware project monitoring and evaluation system.** Quantitative and qualitative indicators and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track the effectiveness of implementing the gender strategy in the fishing communities.

The Fish Forever monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan is the main source of data and analysis of the program and activities. The M&E is a set of indicators to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the program in communities. Data collection and analysis must be disaggregated by gender to ensure that the promotion of women’s empowerment is impacting coastal fishing communities in a positive way and without unintended circumstances (e.g., men retaliating against women because of their increased role in fisheries management bodies or increase profitability of their businesses).

In the Fish Forever M&E Plan, “gender inclusion” is defined as the proportion of women that are participating in the management decision dialog and decision-making process. It comprises the proportion of survey respondents that are female fishers and active participants in management decisions, the proportion of women that participated in group discussions and those that actively contributed, and the responsiveness of decision-making process to female input. However, participation defined as attending, does not equate with meaningful participation nor empowerment and different levels of participation have to be measured and recognized.

There are other metrics (see M&E plan) and country-specific metrics could be developed to monitor how the implementation and outcomes of gender aware approaches translates into more equitable decision making in the fisheries management as well as in fish-related businesses.
References

- https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs