

Gender transformative approach to promote women in fisheries and aquaculture

RELEVANCE

Women play a crucial role in the fisheries and aquaculture sector worldwide, estimated to represent 47 % of the global fisheries workforce (World Bank, 2012; FAO, 2018). They significantly contribute to household food security and livelihoods through various activities, including harvesting, processing marketing, and managing small-scale fishing operations. In aquaculture, women are involved in pond preparation, seed collection, feeding, and harvesting.

Despite their contributions, women's roles often go unnoticed and undervalued. They face gender-based discrimination, limited access to credit and financial resources, and lack tenure rights to fishing grounds. Excluded from decision-making processes and leadership roles, their voices and perspectives are marginalized. Additionally, inadequate training and extension services hinder their ability to innovate and adopt new skills and technologies necessary for boosting productivity and profitability.

Empowering women in fisheries and aquaculture is not only a matter of gender equality, SDG 5, and for the achievement of SDG 2 and 10, zero hunger and reduced inequalities, but also a critical step towards sustainable development in the whole sector. As highlighted in the FAO policy on gender equality, when women have equal opportunities, access to resources, and decision-making power, they can significantly contribute to poverty reduction, food security, and environmental sustainability (FAO, 2020).

Capacity-building opportunities and the elimination of structural barriers are crucial for ensuring women's participation in decision-making processes. Investing in women's empowerment can unlock the full potential of the fisheries and aquaculture sector, promoting inclusive and sustainable development.

The Global Programme "Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture" is implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.



The aim of the programme is an increase of fish supply from sustainable and resource-friendly fisheries and aquaculture to boost a healthy and diverse nutrition in Cambodia, India, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritania, Uganda and Zambia. Sustainable production and processing techniques are promoted along the value chain in order to create jobs and income, with a special focus on youths and women. Local organisations are strengthened in their capacities to carry on programme interventions on a long-term basis. And policy advice is contributing to favourable framework conditions for a sustainable development of the fisheries and aquaculture sector in the implementing countries.

To recognize and address the unique needs and contributions of women in fisheries and aquaculture, the Global Programme Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture took into consideration several gender transformative approaches. Gender transformative approaches are concerned with re-dressing gender inequalities, removing structural and sociocultural barriers such as unequal roles and rights, and empowering disadvantaged populations. Gender transformative approaches seek to treat not only the symptoms of gender inequality, e.g. unequal access to resources, but also underlying complex relations, discriminatory social structures, and practices. Therefore, targeting not only women, but aiming also to create or strengthen gender relations, policies and structures that support gender equality. All the approaches presented in this knowledge product aim to create an inclusive and equitable fisheries and aquaculture sector.

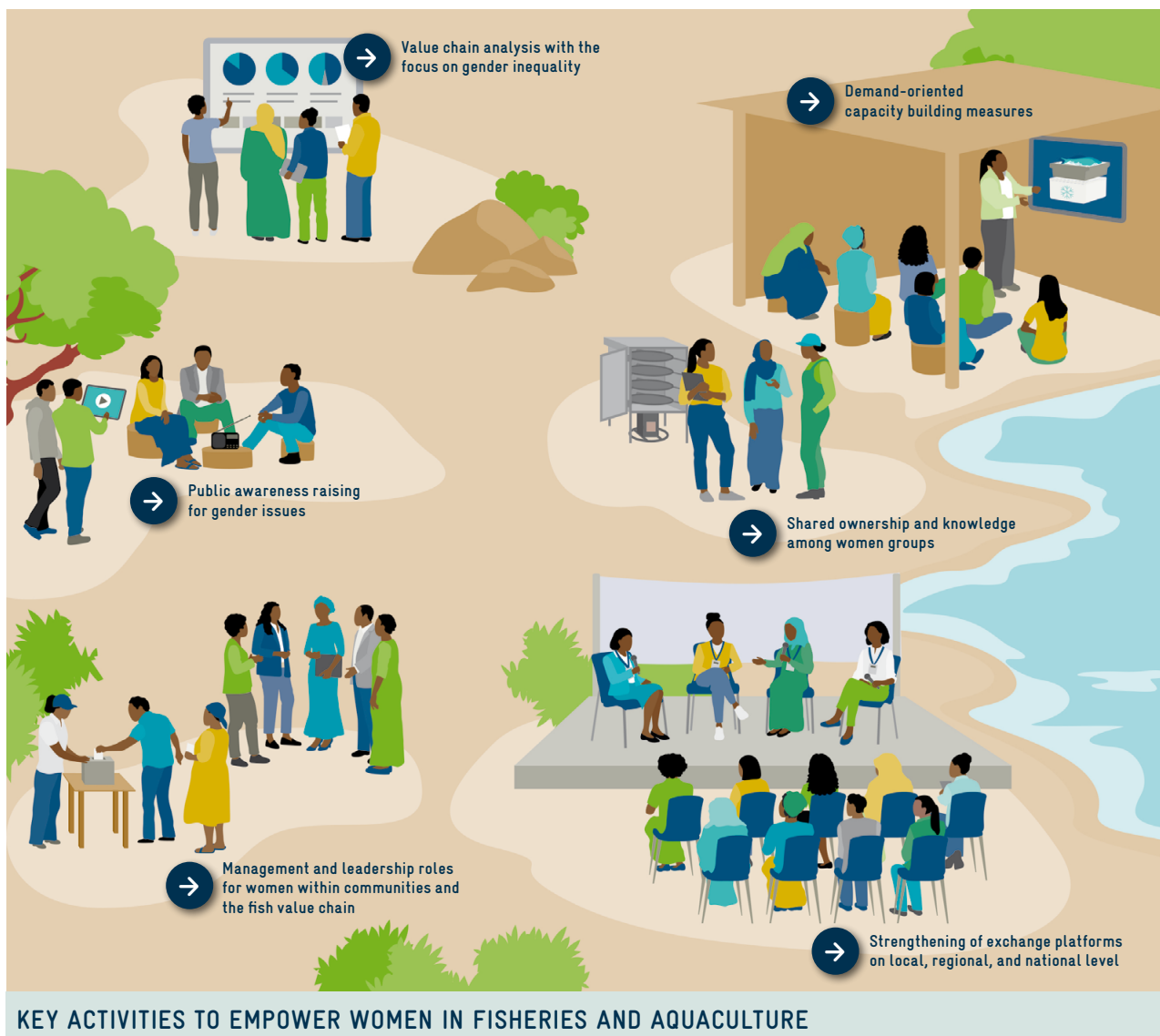
The promoted approaches include building agency, meaning the ability of women to make own choices and act upon them, based on more self-esteem, self-efficacy, and aspiration. They also include changing relations through strengthening women's networks and platforms and capacity development for women's groups, gender analysis and mainstreaming as well as involvement of women in leadership roles within fish refuge committees to transform existing structures. Additionally, significant investments in comprehensive policy reforms aimed at dismantling systemic barriers to achieve Goal 5 – gender equality.

APPROACH

➔ Analysis of gender roles and capacities in the value chain

To get a better understanding of the social roles and activities of men and women in the fish value chain, a value chain analysis with the focus on gender inequality can be applied. Based on the analysis a gender strategy can be promoted focusing on the development of a joint pathway towards gender equality.

The analysis takes place on different levels, including both desk reviews as well as field research. The country level includes documentation of leadership positions of men and women, access and ownership of land and water resources, wage deployment in the fish value chain and the access to education.



On a macro level, the review of sector relevant policies and strategies such as the water policy for example and their acknowledgement of a framework for gender mainstreaming and a gender bias is conducted. The results of this review are then compared with the actual implementation of these sector specific policies in activities of institutions, because legislative framework and the practical application of gender mainstreaming in actions may differ.

While the meso level focuses on partner organisations and their support of gender-balanced participation and implementation of gender mainstreaming, the micro level includes a qualitative analysis, concentrating on the target group. Questions include sector specific and business knowledge as well as power relations at both community and household levels. Finally, extension service workers are asked about their specific gender training and knowledge.

For example, the gender analysis conducted by the “Fish for Food Security” (F4F) project in Zambia indicated that men tend to dominate fishing and farming (95 %) while women (90 %) dominate the post-harvest fishing activities, active in retailing, marketing, and selling fish. This leads often to an income gap between male and female traders. Additionally, the analysis helped to identify barriers, socio-norms and power differences hindering women from doing fish farming. It identified key strategic areas for implementation, such as using a household approach for gender mainstreaming to redistribute power relations, integrating gender mainstreaming in already existing interventions at community level, partner organisations capturing more and better gender-related data or having a special gender mainstreaming budget line.

→ Capacity building

Based on the results of the gender analysis, a demand-oriented gender strategy can be adopted. Approaches and activities include not only measures focused on removing structural barriers but also aspects such as the adjustment of training venues, training locations, and time to enhance the accessibility for differently abled people and all genders. All are part of demand-oriented capacity building measures.



“Gender Makes Business Sense” (GmBS) by the project “Aquaculture Value Chain for Higher Income and Food Security in Malawi” (AVCP) is such a practical capacity development programme for agripreneurs, aimed at enhancing participants understanding of business while



Women taking part in a business planning exercise during a workshop in Malawi.

integrating gender dimensions. It focuses on gender transformative changes, tackling power relations at root causes systematically, and seeking behavioural change at various levels and stages to redress gender imbalances at the different levels of the aquaculture value chain.

Through the experiential learning approach both women and men are equipped with practical business management skills and financial know-how as well as an understanding of the socio-economic impact of gender dynamics in their business. The programme seeks change not only from agripreneurs but from value chain actors themselves, policy actors, and the GmBS facilitators in the field. It therefore trains not only farmers, but also stakeholders including extension workers, senior fisheries officers, and political focal persons to lobby for the inclusion of gender transformative change approaches at the policy level. Through the engagement of various actors from all genders, the potential to transform social relations for example regarding decision-making and access to resources towards food security is improved.

To promote ownership and continue to equip farmers with the skills and knowledge shared by GmBS, it has been integrated into an “Aquaculture Technical and Vocational Education and Training” (A-TVET) programme. Training institutes, such as the Malawi College of Fisheries or the Stephanos Vocational Training Centre, were supported with training materials, toolkits, and further qualification of their trainers in gender transformative aquaculture.

Another capacity building programme was the training of women groups on Lake Victoria, Uganda by the “Responsible Fisheries Business Chains Project” (RFBCP) to enhance and strengthen women’s capacities to equally



Participants of the “Business Development Services” training in Uganda receive certificates after one year of training.

participate in the fisheries value chain. In contrast to GmBS it was more focused on building up confidence and skills in the field. Female boat owners, processors and traders were trained about hygiene handling, fish processing, team building, leadership principles and conflict management to sustain small-scale fisheries.

As an outcome of the training measures women were not only encouraged to increase their involvement in the decision-making processes, but also to publicly speak about ways to protect fisheries resources and advocate for themselves without fear, contributing also to a reduction of domestic violence. They furthermore strengthened women groups and worked better as a team.

The training in “Business Development Services” (BDS) in Uganda focused on entrepreneurs involved in the fish value chain at micro and small-scale levels acquiring knowledge, skills, and competencies that are critical to business development and the promotion of sustainability. It was implemented at Lake Victoria and Lake Kyoga in partnership with local organisations such as the “Katosi Women Development Trust” (KWDT), the “Association of Fishers Lake User Uganda” (AFALU), and the “Federation of Fisheries Organisations Uganda” (FFOU).

The trainers educating about business development concepts were community-based, participated in a Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop, and held monthly coordination meetings for exchange. They focused on topics like reinforcing the groups, entrepreneurship, business planning, branding and marketing, financial management and fish processing and value addition, record keeping aimed

at enhancing skills and knowledge, and attitudes regarding business operations. For better and long-term success, the training materials were illustrated and translated into the local languages. The activities led to a business growth, which has strengthened women’s confidence in doing business as well as expanded women’s networks.

To measure the success of the capacity building approach, a baseline survey and impact evaluation can be conducted. Such was done for the BDS programme in Uganda. The baseline survey helped to establish the status of the fisheries business and their demands while the impact evaluation measured the application of the training contents. Results indicate that over 80 % of the participants were applying the content into their fisheries businesses. It’s important to consider that women’s access to capacity-building training doesn’t stop at training, but next to involvement in women’s networks and exchange groups the application of the content is key for business growth as well as empowerment, enhanced through more self-esteem and independence.

➔ Awareness raising

To publicly raise awareness on gender equality and structural boundaries, different approaches were taken by the projects.



In the “Project for Aquaculture in Madagascar” (*Projet d’Aquaculture Durable à Madagascar*, PADM), part of the training from the cooperative “Tilapia de l’Est” (TDE) for female small-scale aquaculture producers was the topic how to involve more women in the cooperative. To fight against the stereotype, that the profession of aquaculture is a “man’s job” and to improve the representation of women

in the sector they documented women's success stories to encourage other women to venture into fish farming. The stories were on the one hand spread through videos to integrate them in the training and capacity-building activities. To raise awareness on the role of women, they on the other hand produced ten "success stories" of female fish farmers based on a survey and broadcasted them in three regional and one national radio station each morning and evening for two months.

In Zambia, F4F followed another approach with the video and comic series "Let Me Tell You". In those, women are represented as female fish farmers and actors in the fish value chain, working together with men in their communities and families with equal knowledge and contribution, therefore depicting gender equality as a norm. For example, Chimwewe, the grandmother figure in the series, often explains important knowledge and is praised by the others, regardless of their gender, as wise and skilful.

→ Management roles for women

Capacity building measures through trainings or awareness campaigns can help to overcome sociocultural barriers, but structural boundaries, unequal rights and policy could remain. To limit these boundaries for gender equality, the involvement of all genders in management organisations is important. In Cambodia, the "Sustainable Aquaculture and Community Fish Refuge Management Project" (SAFR) promoted women's participation in leadership and management of the Community Fish Refuge (CFR) committees – a form of dam or other water resource management organisation which members are elected by the community. CFR management are vital fish conservation measures that intend to improve the productivity of rice field fisheries and reduce illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. The approach introduces community-based management committees and assists them in developing plans such as detailing how and when the fish is utilized and by whom. This initiative significantly contributes to rural livelihoods by enhancing food security, nutrition, and income generation by restoring rice field fisheries systems that are accessible to everyone.



To ensure women's equal participation in the decision-making process, the programme supported the electoral process for CFR leadership within the communities where rice field fisheries exist. Capacity-building training was conducted with the members focusing on organisa-



Committee member explaining the Community Fish Refuge concept in a community meeting in Cambodia.

tional development, transparent decision-making, gender roles and improved management. Through this, a social-ecological environment was created, in which members could actively and jointly manage their resources. The support also involved documenting and encouraging women to take on active roles in the management of the committees, such as vice chief and accountant positions. It also took into consideration how to reduce participation boundaries for women, for example by situating CFR closer to the village to increase safety while fishing.

» As a woman, I know that not only me, but other women in the community also feel proud to work for the community assuming that the society accepts and supports us in decision-making positions. After several elderly people from the community approached my husband and suggested he encourage me to become a candidate, I decided to play a more active role in community development and stand as a candidate for a position on our CFR Management Committee.«

Ms. Sokh Samart, a woman CFR Management Committee member from Boeng Khangek Ngout.

In Madagascar, PADM followed a similar approach to promote leadership of women in farmer's groups and increase their representation in decision-making bodies. As for the CFR their programme included training in the promotion of women's memberships, development of a strategy to encourage women to express their opinion in decision-making groups and management organisations and in the valorisation of women's work and contribution to fish farms. They also included a special training for men to mentor and accompany women to become leaders themselves, highlighting the necessity to include the whole community in gender transformative approaches.

» I must admit that I did not know much about the importance of having women join the (CFR Management) Committee. After I received training on gender roles and I better understood them, I realized that women are as important as men in doing community work. So, my male colleagues and I work together and support the female CFR Management Committee members to perform their jobs.«
Mr. Ly Peng Chhoun, CFR Chief – Boeng Khangek Ngout.

To enable women to assert themselves and assume full responsibility at all levels in the long term, PADM assisted in the creation of a support framework, including regularly using different tools and maintaining contact with the trainers.

Instead of being restricted to housework according to traditional gender roles, through agency and capacity building together with a demand-oriented, refined management, women were empowered to actively contribute to the development of their communities.

→ Platforms for women in the fish value chain

The final gender transformative approach is not only to change relations, but also to initiate changes in structural boundaries, policies, and rights by strengthening local, national, and regional platforms where women can connect and share their knowledge and experiences.



On a local level for example Ugandan women organised themselves in groups to even out some economic disadvantages they face due to lack of capital and utensils to process fish. They are led by the “Katosi Women Development Trust” (KWDT) and received modern equipment such as



Capacity building training for women groups under the “Katosi Women Development Trust” in Uganda.



Participants of the “African Women Fish Processors and Traders Network” Symposium 2019 in Kampala.

smoking kilns by RFBCP, thus helping to balance children, household, and fish processing. With the help of business development training the women in the group can organise themselves, share their skills with each other, and can invest their savings in new equipment without having to rely on external support in the long term.

On the national level, the programme also supported the establishment of the “Uganda National Women’s Fish Organization” (UNWFO), a platform for women processors and traders in Uganda. The network focuses on creating sustainable opportunities, fostering innovation, and advocating for inclusive value chains. The support included the development of a constitution, a strategy, action plans, and a gender plan.

Additionally, the programme strengthened the regional umbrella network, the “African Women Fish Processors and Traders Network” (AWFISHNET), by supporting the development of action plans, budgets, and a resource mobilisation strategy for their East African Chapter. It also assisted the organisation of the AWFISHNET Symposium 2019 in Kampala, Uganda, where women from across the African continent were able to network, share knowledge and experiences on value addition, and influence decision-making processes through exhibitions and presentations.

These national and regional platforms allow women to share best practices, experiences, and technologies in a collaborative way that drives innovations. They promote dialogue and negotiation, increasing the participation of women in policy dialogues at both the national and regional levels.

IMPACT

The various trainings for capacity building provided by experienced trainers, who were themselves trained in gender transformative approaches and gender equality, had a huge impact not only on the skills and knowledge gained on different aspects of the fish value chain, but also on empowering women and increasing their self-esteem. This effect was amplified by a friendly and supportive atmosphere and safe environment created in the trainings as well as using the local language and the comprehensible delivery of content.

By involving local training institutes and organisations in the development, piloting, and roll out of trainings, not only was a sense of ownership created in the community, but the approaches were also more demand-oriented, which is necessary for success. This led to a broader and more deeply rooted shift towards gender equality. The uptake of the training content was additionally ensured by an experiential learning approach, follow-up loops by local trainers, support networks or participation in exchange platforms that allowed for gradual outsourcing and self-reliance.

The combination of empowerment and capacity building measures in a holistic approach tackles technical knowledge and business planning as well as skills and mindset, and belief systems regarding gender. This secures not only women getting a certificate, but a sustainable change in gender relations enhancing successful businesses.

To increase the impact of networks and exchange platforms, there is a need to create benefits for members to motivate them to actively participate. Such benefits include regular exchanges and useful support regarding fish farming or gender equality related issues. This depends on long-term hosting and sustainable financing for these institutions, which should therefore be addressed from the outset.

Overall, the training led to more knowledge, skills, and access to information on sector specific topics and greater participation and representation of women along the fish value chain. This contributed positively to the sustainability of fish resources, which was reflected in new methods of fish processing, better customer service, accounting and financial management. Many women improved their economic autonomy and are now able to take out loans to expand their businesses or purchase new equipment, either alone or through fishing groups.



Women-self-help group members harvesting fish together in India.

An example of this improvement shares Nabuuma Proscocia from Kalangala, Uganda, who describes how her business and aspirations have improved through capacity and agency building approaches:

»» My business is now worth 1,250 euros ever since I joined BDS training. Initially, I had a poor saving culture. I could not differentiate my expenses from the daily operating capital. I would lend out my capital and fail to keep records for my creditors. I had poor customer care and could not separate my money from the business money. After the BDS training, I adopted a saving culture after opening a personal bank account. I am now able to save an average of 62.50 euros per week. I am also able to separate business money from personal money. I no longer lend out my operating capital to other people. My customer care services improved, which has enhanced my customer base. My interpersonal skills improved so that can relate to them in a free and polite manner. I live an exemplary life as a leader in my business. I enhanced the quality of my fish through proper preservation methods, and my customers can offer better prices and minimize post-harvest losses. And this has enhanced my income. My future is to own an ice container that can preserve fish for long hours and enable me to expand my market base.«

Additionally, the promotion of women in leadership and management positions was successful. Due to a higher self-esteem and empowerment, as well as new perspectives on gender roles and mutual respect, women are now more involved in the discussion of policy guidelines and management plans. Teddy Nagombi from Mbale says:

»» I can now easily talk in public with confidence without any fear because I feel empowered to contribute to any meeting without fear of being silenced by anybody which was never the case.«

Nampala Prossy remarks on her improved leadership and teamwork skills:

»» Before the training we would make decisions on behalf of the groups because women did not respect one another but after receiving the training in leadership principles I must consult group members before any key decision is made.«

The capacity building and gender equality approaches changed not only the social relationships of members in a community, but also the understanding of roles at the household level. This even contributed to a reduction in cases of domestic violence. Najuma from Bugula shares her experience:

»» I used to fight with my husband all the time but with the training in conflict resolution, I have learned how I relate and respond to my husband during times of conflict.«

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