

## **10. Value chain management in fisheries with a gender focus**

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The famous Chinese proverb ‘women hold up half the sky’ stands true for the world population also. Even then, gender-based bias is evident at all facets of life, conscious or unconscious, which manifest in many ways. Equal opportunities for women in all phases of life have long been more aspiration than fact, which stands true for fisheries sector also. Fisheries, both capture and culture, make momentous contributions to mankind by way of employment and food security. The involvement of women is imperative in fisheries also like in any other food production systems of the world. But women’s contributions are either undervalued or she faces discrimination where ever she involves in many visible and invisible forms. For this reason, her sharing in fisheries activities is limited. Ultimately, the contribution of half the workforce to the fisheries sector remains deficient leading to loss in individual and national perspective. This is to be addressed with utmost importance examining the position and role of women in the fishery supply chains and also guaranteeing the efficient participation of women in the value chains of fisheries through proper restructuring.

### **Women and fishing industry**

Mostly, fishing from huge water bodies is considered as a male domain, especially when mechanized boats, huge gears and other equipment are used. May it be in sea or inland waters. Also, women are reluctant if it involves long absences from home. But in small scale fishery for catching fish from small ponds and for collection of clam and mussels, crab etc, women also do involve. The domination of women is felt in post-harvest operations like pre-processing and processing, but with no gender balance. In Aquaculture sector also, which is one of the fastest growing food sectors of the world, the sharing of benefits by way of employment and income are not equitable to men and women.

### **Supply chain of fish and women**

In fisheries, supply chain is a network of actors through whom fish and fish products move from production site to end user after undergoing necessary pre- processing and processing activities. Here, women are placed traditionally in the roles like sorting, preprocessing, curing, drying and trading. Their role in production is limited depending upon the nature of fishery and regions.

Though they dominate in shrimp peeling and some other processing sectors, which vary with countries and kind of fishery, the women face gender disparity in terms of division of labour, access to resources, wage rate, health care, etc. In preprocessing centres, the occupational health hazards are the menus awaiting womenfolk. The managerial and supervisory roles are

assigned to men, who get better work atmosphere and better wages. Even in curing and dry fish making, women have poor access to good quality and quantity fish, technology and infra structure for making superior quality products. While looking at the fish trade, women folk are forced to resort to low value fishes or less volume of fishes. Most of the male traders when scale up their enterprise with savings, women use micro-credits and loans as the initial source of funding and spend the savings at home. The low capital becomes a limitation in purchase power, getting high value species and hence better selling place or customers. Consequently, they spend more time and effort and earn less. Above all, when mechanization is brought in any of these sectors, women will be thrown out of their job. Thus, women's roles in the supply chain of fish are often less noticed and their issues are less addressed.

### **Introducing Value chain in Fisheries**

Fishery value chains are widely discussed these days, which portrays business models focusing on aspects of how fishery raw materials are received as input, how best interventions can be made so as to add value to the raw materials through various processes and sell finished products at a higher margin to customers and thus create a competitive advantage. In value chain creation, a cost is always involved, which need to be accounted while targeting a higher margin. i.e., *Value Created and Captured – Cost of Creating that Value = Margin*. At each node of the value chain, which varies depending on the species of fish, mode of trade, regional differences, interventions are made to provide innovative products or even services/practices in trade to attract customers. To create a good value chain, modern technology for innovative product making, sophisticated infra structure and equipment, efficient storage systems, best packaging techniques, professional transportation as well as access of up-to-date market information and feedback services are very much crucial. Here, women, who otherwise lag behind by dearth of capital and other resources, have got all chances to be marginalized. Gender discrimination in the value chains of small-scale fisheries is easily noticed by the low value attached to their work, which is further established by their limited access to credit, processing and storage technology and facilities and training. So, they have less access to resources, assets, and decision-making processes, which always confines them to peripherals of value chains in many developing countries( Pétur Waldorff, 2017). Chikondi et al (2017), while making a study on how fish trade contributes to the livelihoods of specific groups within communities dependent on fisheries in Africa, reports that women are relatively integrated in all the nodes and activities of the value chain, but their participation in leadership positions is limited because men dominate leadership and decision-making positions. Value chain interventions need to be made keeping an eye on the role generally performed by women in the fishing industry, both capture and culture.

Depending on the financial capacity and access to resources, the extent of participation by women as well as their revenue will vary like in the capture as well as culture fishery. Women commonly are observed to be participating in the following roles, which vary according to the country and fishery. In **Aquaculture**, women's contributions cannot be ruled out anyway. From pond preparation onwards, in all stages like seeding, feeding, harvesting, fish handling, trading as well as processing, women play key roles. In **capture fishery**, most women are found to occupy certain positions which usually are not the prominent nodes of the supply

chain. Yet, the extent of participation and returns generated are not up to the mark due to the gender-based imbalances.

### **Fish Handling and Processing**

In general, almost all women in fishing communities all over the world are playing great role in fish handling and grading. Female participation at these lower-level nodes of the value chain which require relatively unskilled labor. They perform it at traditional and mechanized landing centres.

### **Fish distribution**

In general, high value end of the fishery value chain is handled by men all over the world with the exception of few cases, while women remain in low value end almost every time and everywhere. Exceptions are very few. The modern value chains with fewer nodes make fewer women participation than in traditional value chains. Their access to modern value chains is less due to poor access rights to assets, credit services, markets and information on new technology, consumer performances and export trade.

### **Fish Retail**

At large, female fish dealers collect fish from the beach or production site and sell it in the closer domestic markets or go to nearer households on regular basis. However, poor access to credit and transport facilities limit them to lower volume sales and discourage them from reaching distant markets or high value fishes earning higher margins.

### **Processing**

Majority workforce in fish processing industries are females and the patience and special skill sets possessed by women to deal with the fishes are told to be the reason for this. However, female participation in quality control and product development sections are comparable to that by male, but majority of the managers are males.

### **Bringing in women to the advanced value chains**

While women possess traditionally skill and aptitude for fish processing and presence of fish-based products are fewer in the shelves of food stores, the scope of enabling women to be fish food manufacturers is enormous. Food industry is predicted to be sunrise sector in the forthcoming years. Hence, the possibility of assimilation of women in the process of building up improvised value chains in fisheries needs to be considered seriously.

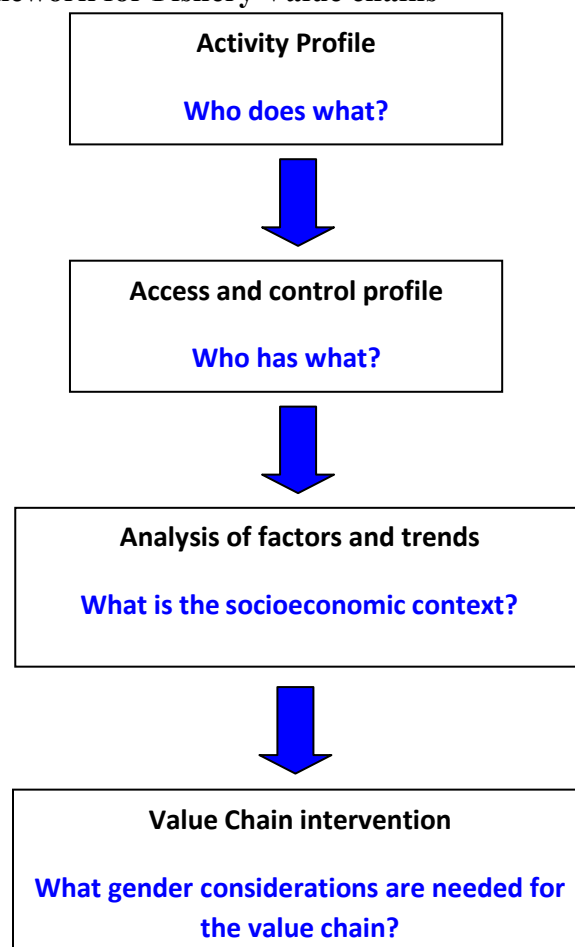
For this, gendered value chain analysis needs to be done on each fishery, which need to be customised again for each region. This not for assuring a career opportunity for women in fisheries, but for improving the overall productivity and thus the profitability and sustainability of fishing industry by incorporating the otherwise unused, but one of the most skilled and efficient workforces. Such an analysis will bring to light the nature of distribution of resources and revenue primarily, the roles played, the technology interventions and its anticipated benefits, the various actors in the chain with their essentiality and type of authority, etc.

## **Gender analysis**

Gender analysis, according to Ministry women affairs, New Zealand, examines the differences in women's and men's lives, including those which lead to social and economic inequity for women, and applies this understanding to policy development and service delivery is concerned with the underlying causes of these inequities. Its ultimate aim is to achieve positive change for the women.

The gender analysis frame work given below is developed from the Framework originally developed Ministry women affairs, New Zealand with few modifications, which describes the steps to analyze gender in the global fishery value chain. As indicated in figure, the frame work has four sections namely the activity profile, the access and control profile, the analysis of factors and trends and finally Value Chain intervention need to be done based on the results. There are different frameworks developed by different agencies for different purposes. Out of which, the framework developed by Ministry of Women Affairs, New Zealand, with few modifications can be used for Gender Analysis in Fishery for suitable interventions in Value chains.

### **Gender Analysis Framework for Fishery Value chains**



(Source: Ministry of Women Affairs, New Zealand)

### **Activity profile**

In this step, main focus is on the nature of roles performed by the actors comprising all age and gender categories. It will throw light to the type of activities, places of action, duration, wages etc. Through this, the roles of women including the house hold work, fishery related works and other supportive roles can be well understood in contrast with the menfolk in same region and culture.

### **Access and control profile**

While assessing the access and control profile, one can get a comprehensive outlook about the roles played by the actors in the value chain with respect to the access to and control of resources like land, equipment, labor, capital and credit, education, and technology and in decision making. It is a well-established fact that one's access to / control of resources is well correlated to his/her decision-making power and hence this part of analysis will bring to light why and where women are marginalized or unable to compete with the other gender to enter into the high value nodes of value chain and remain as skilled workers. In the modern value chains, where the number of nodes is reduced, women are more marginalized or dispersed.

### **Analysis of factors and trends**

While analyzing the factors and trends, the influence of various structural factors like demography, economics, legal and institutional aspects as well as the cultural and religions of a region on the nature of activity, access, and control patterns. This directly or indirectly impact the gender relations and gender roles of that region which is reflected in the gender-based role disparity in fisheries sector also.

While selecting gender analysis framework, proper care should be taken to select the method suitable for the situation analysis considering the gender relations and culture of the region. Or else, it can have unanticipated results as the case shown in the box below:

### **Value Chain Intervention**

A fish-smoking project developed by UNIFEM in Guinea illustrates the dangers of using a gender-roles analysis only. A gender-roles analysis, similar to the Harvard Framework, revealed the following division of labour: men caught fish; women smoked and sold the fish. The project formed the women into groups and introduced new improved stoves. However, the project failed, because no thought had been given to how the women got the fish. Women usually got their fish through special relationships of mutual advantage with specific fishermen. When the project started, the women were seen to be beneficiaries of external funds and the fishermen increased their prices. The women could not afford to buy at the increased prices, either as individuals or as groups. A working system had been disrupted and no viable alternative put in its stead. A relations analysis would have looked closely at the relationships between the men and the women and tried to start from there. ( Source: A Guide to Gender Analysis Frameworks by Candida et al, 1999)

In this stage, steps are taken to plan and implement gender sensitive interventions in the value chain, monitor it and based on evaluation and feed backs from field, make fine-tuning if necessary. It's a continuing process and includes interventions by way of providing gender sensitive and customized solutions comprising new or improved methods of value addition, new equipment, processes, policy support, etc equipping women to position themselves aptly in the value chain. This will also comprise of steps like reduction of number of intermediaries and upgraded storage and transport facilities so as to reap maximum benefit from value added products sold in the global value chain.

In the Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT), working under the auspices of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), a serious attempt was made to introduce customized business models for value addition of small pelagic fishes equipping women from coastal areas through imparting skill on value addition methods. The attempt was done through pilot level units established at different locations in P-P-P mode incorporating relevant government and non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).



Though the interventions in prevailing value chains were successful and proved more revenue generating, many of the women groups didn't survive much due to managerial issues and conflicts of interests between women groups and the NGOs engaged for local coordination. Due to lack of capital and access to resources, the women groups were dependent on the support agencies and had no decision-making rights. The endeavor was made under the support of World bank aided National Agricultural Innovation Project.



Efforts for assuring proper representation of women in the modern value chains which demands more inputs by way of knowledge, skill and capital requires integrated approach and even policy interventions.

### **Conclusion**

All over the world, lakhs of women have been working in the fishing industry from age old times. They play multiple roles including shouldering house hold responsibilities, roles as a fishery stakeholder and supportive roles to facilitate other actors where they cannot have a major role ie, they prepare food for fishermen going to outer sea, repair nets, sell minor fishing inputs etc. Ultimately, when men go out to sea for many days, the woman manage the household taking over all risks including financial.

Still, at the advent of mechanization and upgrading the value chains introducing advanced technology and infrastructure options, when women get marginalized, nobody pays attention. As a result, women began to be excluded from fisheries. They are slowly getting reduced in number in the case of developed countries and still struggle to exist in developing countries. The reason for the invisibility of women in the fishing industry lies in the fact that the activities of women engaged in fisheries and related work are largely ignored (Hitomi, 2009). The structure of women's role in capture fisheries and aquaculture differs across community, country and region.

Earnest efforts for identifying and assessing the women's involvement in global fishery value chains through right gender analysis frameworks and making an integrated approach to extend necessary financial, technological and training support for the women in the sector will not only benefit the women reap benefits of the value chain approach but also contribute to the overall productivity and sustainability of the fishing industry and the dependent populations.

### **References**

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