

Gender, fisheries and development

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Abstract

Although West African fisheries have been the subject of considerable study, little attention has paid to the role of gender in the development process and, more specifically, the work done by women in the overall management of fisheries. Lack of attention to the gender dimension of fisheries management can result in policy interventions missing their target of creating sustainable livelihoods at the community level. There is little doubt that fishing-dependent communities have a vital role to play in the overall development process of many coastal West African States, but without a complete understanding of the complexity of gender roles, the goal of sustainable livelihoods is unlikely to be achieved. In a bid to improve knowledge about gender roles in fishing communities, and to provide policy makers with some guidance as to where interventions might be most useful, a workshop was held in Cotonou, Benin (West Africa) in December 2003. This paper provides a brief introduction to the theory on gender and fisheries development and then goes on to report the findings of the workshop. The most significant conclusion is that policy interventions which help strengthen institutional capacity in coastal artisanal communities would have the greatest overall impact. A move toward collecting gender and fisheries disaggregated data would also help expand existing knowledge about what are often marginal and isolated economic sectors.

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1. Introduction

The role of women in the management and use of natural resource-based livelihoods in the developing world has long been acknowledged but has rarely been valued on an equal par with that of men, thus reflecting gender hierarchies in individual societies. In many fisheries, women have traditionally occupied the pre- and post-harvest sector concentrating on financing the fleet, processing and marketing the catch. In addition to these tasks, women have also had to look after the household unit taking care of the family's educational, health and dietary needs. Although gender roles are clearly important in fishing communities, they mostly feature in anthropological studies and are often ignored in economic or social research. That said, there is a

growing recognition of the importance of taking a gendered view of natural resource management, although this view is still rare in the fisheries sector [1–3].

Despite the important role played by women in the fishing sector, the social space they occupy has often remained invisible to researchers and policy makers. The lack of documentation on women's role in the sector can be explained by a number of factors. Firstly, production goals and solving the 'over-exploitation' problem continue to dominate national policy agendas, thus research attention continues to be focused on the catching sector (male dominated) rather than the processing and marketing sector (female dominated); secondly, research which purports to be gender-neutral is often 'gender-blind' and fails to see the bigger livelihoods picture. This is compounded by researchers who are often unable to include women in interviews and discussions for cultural reasons, or because male family members 'speak' for them. Thirdly, at the national level, fisheries data is

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often aggregated with the agriculture sector and there is no desegregation of data along gender lines making it doubly difficult to extract information pertinent to the fisheries sector in general, and to gender in particular.¹

Lack of knowledge on gender roles, and women's role in particular has a number of implications. Firstly, the nuances of gender roles and spaces in the sector are rarely taken into account by resource managers and policy makers who direct their attention at controlling the catching sector in pursuit of economic and biological objectives. Secondly, the precise roles are known only to those immediately connected to those working in the sector—little information is available to policy makers. Because policy makers tend to choose the path of least resistance, this lack of knowledge on the roles of women within the sector can exacerbate their already precarious position. Gender roles in the fisheries sector are dynamic and have to change in relation to each other and their activities in order that livelihoods are protected and the ultimate goals of food provision, family security and socio-economic advancement can be attained. The failure of policy makers and resource managers to fully engage with the issue of gender in the sector has resulted in a large resource (namely, the relationship between men and women) being underused and undervalued.

In order to redress this balance, and signal up some possible ways forward, this paper examines the current knowledge about the role of gender in the fisheries sector in West Africa. First, a brief outline of the theory regarding women, gender and fisheries development is given. Then, using the results of a workshop held in Benin in December 2003, it highlights the challenges facing women in fisheries-dependent communities in the region, how strategies for meeting these challenges have been devised and how policy might best be shaped to remove the barriers to the formation of coping strategies.

2. Gender, women and development

Gender and women are not the same thing. Sex refers to biological difference (men and women); gender is a means of understanding how society operates through the study of the negotiation of power roles and influence between men and women. Understanding how gender impacts upon how fisheries are managed, for example, means looking at how men *and* women interact with the resource.²

¹It should be noted that the lack of disaggregation of data by gender can also be attributed to the fact that the 'family unit' in the fishing sector has not received the same degree of attention as the 'family unit' in the agricultural sector, where gender disaggregated data are more widely available [4].

²Because academia tends to focus on the study of the less powerful, using gender as an analytical tool tends to focus on women, hence the

Davis and Nadel-Klein [5] distinguish between three approaches to gender. The first two treat gender as a binary subject: gender that signifies the separate spheres inhabited by men and women; gender that signifies the difference between power and marginalisation. The third type moves beyond seeing gender as a binary divider of society, as a means of stratification (seeing differentiation as a function of wealth, class, religion and so on) to seeing gender as simply the description of the spheres around which society operates.

Gender, however, is a socio-cultural concept that is largely based upon European, western philosophical traditions that often sit uneasily in an African context [6]. For example, researchers in various parts of Africa [7,8] note that there is often no explicit concept of male and female roles (father, mother, daughter, son, etc.): social positioning, influence and power is about age and seniority, it is about being within and without the clan and the concept of gender is immaterial to many contexts. We need to be mindful that the social setting that gave rise to feminism and the pursuit of female and gender-related studies in Europe is vastly different to the social setting in Africa. To assume that gender equity and female emancipation are universal truths and goals would be wrong.

So when did 'women' become 'gender'? The shift from women to gender came about in the 1980s when feminists came to the conclusion that Women in Development (WID) programmes were about integrating women into the existing broader development discourse, rather than tackling the inherent inequalities of power [9, p. 74]. Placing gender at the centre of the discussion has two advantages: it tackles the socially constructed relations between male and female and also the question of power.

In response to the need to place gender rather than women *per se* at the centre of the argument, and the need to operationalise NGO and bilateral requirements for 'gender' aspects to development, gender mainstreaming evolved. This means ensuring that gender is incorporated at all levels of the development process, at all levels of policy making, budgetary planning and evaluation so that it is 'mainstreamed' into the way government operates. Hannan [cited in 9] argues that the difference between the original concept of involving women in development and mainstreaming them into development processes is one of numbers. In the former, the aim was to raise the number of women involved in projects—almost irrespective of the cultural and social implications of changing gender roles in many parts of the world. In the latter, the aim is to incorporate the 'perceptions, experience and interest of women as well as men' in the development agenda. Quite rightly, Hannan

(footnote continued)

focus on the role of women (relative to the role of men) in this paper.

notes that inclusive development policy has to move beyond ticking boxes and numbers to changing attitudes and contexts so that men and women and the power relations between the two are part and parcel of the policy making and implementation process.

Gender mainstreaming is, however, a contentious issue. Some argue that those charged with gender mainstreaming are more taken with the economic efficiency aspects of such moves than the gender improvement aspects [9]. Opponents of neo-liberal policies have focussed in on the World Bank's championing of gender [10] to argue that this is all in fact a ploy to 'marketise' women. That is, if gender is important to economic development then women are in danger of being reduced to producers and marketers. The problem with this is that women already face the double burden of being prime carers in the home and, in many instances, an important source of income earned outside the home; yet the emphasis on the contribution of gender equality to economic development fails to take account of the home-based roles of women. In other words: the income generating activities of women are promoted, but the redefinition of gender roles to alleviate the double burden is ignored [11]. Such a view of the potential benefits/disadvantages of gender mainstreaming are, however, highly polemic and open to considerable debate.

Does this mean, ultimately, that we cannot talk about women in fisheries? No. What it does mean is that discussions that focus on women in fisheries need to be mindful of the implications of relations between men and women and how these 'explain' the position of women. And, when talking about traditional female activities (processing for example) we need to be mindful of how this impacts upon male activities too.

3. Gender and fishing in West Africa

Many fisheries throughout the West African region are pre-financed by women who, because they often control the processing and marketing sectors are the most readily available source of credit [12,13, p. 56]. Women are involved in many complex networks and alliances that enable them to negotiate access to fish and market them successfully. There is thus a symbiotic relationship between the women and men in the fishing industry: neither could survive without the other. Any study of the fishing sector has to take these inter-dependencies into account [14].

Despite the considerable efforts at promoting gender equality and gender mainstreaming within the organisational structures of policy makers and change agents there are still considerable gaps in our knowledge of gender relations in the fisheries sector and how these are affected by change. As the pressure on coastal resources

grows and the sustainability of livelihoods becomes ever more precarious, it is vital that avenues to improve sustainability are pursued—and this means a full appreciation of how gender relations are being addressed in the sector. Throughout the developing world, the role of fisheries in the development process is fragile: catches in many sectors are falling, resource rents continue to be dissipated and, although some development indicators have improved, the pursuit of sustainable livelihoods in all sectors of the economy remains elusive in many parts. Economic reforms in the wake of IMF interventions and Structural Adjustment Programmes have radically changed the context within which the fisheries sector operates. Many countries in the region face competition from foreign fleets [15–18] which is putting added stress on stocks and catches. Environmental factors, notably the continued erosion of the coastline in the Bight of Benin, are affecting the ability of communities to fish [19]. Globalisation is also changing the context within which fishing-dependent communities and artisanal fish markets operate and is impacting upon gender relations and how these are negotiated [20,21]. In particular, the innovative coping strategies developed to confront these challenges need to be documented and understood. Coping mechanisms imply that 'room to manoeuvre' exists or is negotiated and knowledge of how this is established means that lessons can be learned and replicated across the West African region and that weak spots and barriers can be identified and tackled.

The establishment of gendered social space across the industry is neither static nor guaranteed and only exists in its current form because it is constantly changing—its dynamism driven by the needs of men and women to provide an income for their families and to protect their livelihoods. Whilst in many societies fishermen's income is theirs to spend as they wish, income received by women from their activities has to be spent on upkeep of the household—providing a real economic and financial incentive for women to innovate in order to ensure that all their needs (housing, health, education and nutrition) are met [13]. From a livelihoods perspective, therefore, it is arguable that any major change in the economic environment of the fishing-dependent community can have a dramatic effect on the ability of the women to be "active agents of change: the dynamic promoters of social transformations that can alter the lives of *both* women and men" [22].

4. Gender and vulnerability in the context of fishing in West Africa

In order to contribute information from the West African context to help fill the gap in the understanding of gender roles in fishing-dependent communities, a

workshop entitled “Room to Manoeuvre: Gender and Coping Strategies in the Fisheries Sector) was organised in Cotonou (Benin) in December 2003 to contribute to the debate on the role of gender in fisheries. The workshop was funded by the European Commission (DG Research) and organised by IDDRA UK and the Sustainable Livelihoods Fisheries Programme based in Cotonou. The workshop brought together 14 participants from Europe (UK, France, Madeira) and Africa (Guinea, the Gambia, Benin, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, and Tanzania) representing fisheries organisations, universities, research, administration, development, and non-governmental organisations.

The workshop had two objectives: to bring into the open knowledge on the roles and social space occupied by women in the fisheries sector and to explore how coping strategies are formed and how they have evolved in African fishing communities. The output of the workshop was a series of recommendations on how policy could be adapted to empower fishing communities to meet the ever increasing livelihood challenges.

Using the sustainable livelihoods approach³ as a framework for discussion, the workshop looked at the context of the vulnerability of women in the fishing sector, the challenges faced by fisheries-dependent communities in the context of vulnerability and the coping strategies devised by to confront these challenges.

Vulnerability affects a household or community’s ability to withstand shocks and stresses. The workshop found that vulnerability in the social, ecological and economic context was a key driving force behind the innovations and strategies that emerged. Vulnerability presented itself overwhelmingly as an economic and social problem: as a lack of control over both the environment and the profit from productive activities. Although the situation of women involved in fish processing is often more stable than that of men (women frequently have access to greater wealth, more credit, etc.) their vulnerability due to a lack of control over this wealth was telling. Lack of control was often due to cultural mores which circumscribe the movements and actions of women outside the home. Often excluded from the fisheries management process, their control of fisheries resources—how they are managed, how access is allocated and so on—also placed them in a vulnerable position. Whilst lack of control of wealth and assets was clearly an issue, the workshop also found that

in many instances it is in fact the men that are in a vulnerable livelihood position. Presentations at the workshop frequently cited cases where men were unable to get credit to expand their fishing enterprises (whereas women rarely have this problem) and they were less likely to benefit from development initiatives in other areas (expansion of health clinics, literacy drives).

Vulnerability also manifested itself in the lack of literacy amongst women—both in terms of the ability to read and write and also in terms of knowledge about how to run a business. They also suffered from a lack of access to land to start alternative income generating schemes and vulnerability to incoherent development projects.⁴

The most prominent roots of vulnerability highlighted by the workshop were poor institutional formation, organisation and capacity within the region. The level of organisation, the capacity to organise and the support received differed widely across the sector. Djigal [23] noted that Senegal has a long tradition of powerful women operating in strong networks and organisations—built around the wealth that women have accumulated from their trading practices. However, the range and history of women’s organisations and the overwhelming number of women in mixed organisations has not removed the problem of women having comparatively weak access to decision-making processes within these groups. Gambia, on the other hand had weak evidence of women’s organisations, although this was improving with a credit union and revolving savings scheme which had provided some useful entry points to capacity building in this regard [24]. Niger provided some interesting examples of how male and female groups worked separately with the council of elders acting as the link between the two. Following the inputs of an NGO, the council of elders (a traditionally male bastion) had admitted a number of women thus rewriting the description of organisations in the community [25]. And Gnimadi [26] noted that in Benin, a study had mapped male and female organisations yet here, the women’s organisations were financially better off and more successful than the male organisations—despite the fact that they had comparatively fewer decision-making powers than the men.

5. Key challenges facing gender and fisheries development

Based upon the context of vulnerability and the role of institutions in fishing-dependent communities, eight key challenges were identified (see left-hand column in Table 1).

³The sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA) to development recognises that livelihoods are made up of five main sources of capital (human, social, physical, natural and financial) that are mediated and negotiated through a series of policies, institutions and processes. A sustainable livelihood is thus one that has a sufficient mix of ‘capital’ to be able to weather shocks and stresses. The SLA does not concentrate on one economic sector (fishing, for example) but rather aims for a holistic approach to viewing development and solving problems.

⁴For example, the women who find that micro-brewing projects are providing income for others in the community but also contributing to on-going problems of fishermen spending their income on alcohol.

Table 1
Challenges facing West African Coastal communities and coping strategies that have evolved

New challenges	Coping strategies
1. Globalisation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Actions of WTO ● Free trade ● Increased market access to fish 	1. Alternative activities (crafts) by women <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Women's organisation improved ● Negotiation/lobbying activities ● Strengthening of financial capacities ● Improved technology ● Switching to less profitable fish species
2. Resettlement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dam construction ● Tourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strengthening of women's lobbying/negotiation capacities ● Engaging in alternative activities
3. Projects co-opted by men <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Often when profit margins of fishing activity increases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Women's associations form a pressure group ● Awareness-raising for men ● Women moving into management roles
4. Migration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increasing cost of fish/declining resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lobbying administrations to enforce regulations ● Interventions by NGOs through PIPs (credit for women, supporting gender issues) ● By-laws to control conflicts ● Increased social mobilisation ● Assimilation of 'others' into community structures
5. Demand for fish due to increased population pressures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Population pressures due to in-migration ● Population rises due to improved health conditions leading to improved survival of infants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increased family planning ● Awareness raising among men local leaders
6. Environmental <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pollution ● Floods ● Drought ● Coastal erosion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Alternative activities (small-scale village pond culture, reforestation) ● Forced migration
7. Inflation (inputs) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● changes in currency ● increased demand affects inputs such as gear, outboards and fuel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Buying fish on credit ● Setting up traditional savings schemes (tontine) and cooperative societies
8. Health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● HIV/AIDS ● Sanitation ● Food-processing conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Family solidarity ● Anti-stigmatisation campaigns with vulnerable groups

(1) *Globalisation* was recognised as having increased the demand for fish which, whilst welcomed at some levels, was believed to be having drastic impacts on local fishing livelihoods. WTO sanctioned erosion of market preferences for ACP countries for the export of canned tuna to the EU was acknowledged as altering the tuna markets in West Africa and the increased market access to fish was also presenting a challenge in those countries exposed to third country fishing agreements—in particular those signed with the EU [23,27].

(2) *Resettlement* due to dam construction was a challenge highlighted by Gorosa Giwa [28] recounting experiences from Nigeria which has been the focus of a number of significant hydro-electric projects which have led to the resettlement of large populations of fishers and the subsequent detrimental change to livelihoods.

(3) As a consequence of the rise in demand for fish and the increased potential profits in the sector, *projects*

being co-opted by men was an issue raised by Sandonou [27] and Sirra [24] reporting on experiences in Guinea Conakry and The Gambia. Here, although the processing and marketing sectors have traditionally been the arena for women, men have increasingly begun to move into these sectors as profits rise.

(4) *Migration* impacts upon social vulnerability because of the disruption it can cause to families, education and health provision. Although it has always been a traditional coping strategy amongst fishing groups in West Africa, the workshop found that it is now seen as more pervasive and the consequences more damaging—not least because the numbers migrating are larger and the causes driving them are often related to adverse economic changes. This was particularly true on the coast where it was observed that artisanal groups are being driven out of their traditional markets by the potentially lucrative industrial fisheries, often financed

by third country agreements with developed countries (the EU for example) [23,24,27].

(5) *Change in the demand for fish*, the impact upon the supply of fish products and the demand for fish-based protein was seen as a new challenge for fishing communities. The workshop acknowledged that rising demand often led to high prices but there was no sense that the women, as traders, were benefiting from this rise in prices. Rather, participants noted that middle men and new male traders were more likely to benefit from rising markets than the women (see (3) above).

(6) *Environmental problems* related to pollution, floods [28] and, drought [25] posed significant challenges.

(7) *The effect of inflation on inputs* was recognised as a challenge both in the catching sector which then translates to the cost of fish and in the processing sector in terms of fuel.

(8) Finally, *health problems* were mentioned, particularly HIV/AIDS. Although considerable work has been done on the impact of HIV/AIDS in Africa, little attention has been paid to the fishing community. Because of their tradition of migrating and their location in isolated beaches, they have been hard to reach by researchers but are also vulnerable to AIDS/HIV as a result of their livelihood patterns. Sanitation problems were raised—particularly the lack of facilities which are becoming more of an issue as coastal populations rise, and food processing conditions which are often poor and considered a low priority in the community.

In the context of the sustainable livelihoods approach—where the focus is the individual, the household or the community rather than the resource, it is not surprising that the challenges identified are not necessarily specifically related to either fisheries or confined to gender—many of them are challenges related to poverty. Surprisingly, access to resources was not an issue raised: women were by and large recognised as having access to money and fish, but control over that access was cited as a problem. The impact of activities beyond the immediate control of the communities (displacement, environmental problems, macro-economic changes) were frequently mentioned and as a result it was agreed that strategies for coping with these challenges (as will be seen below) were often reactive rather than proactive.

6. Coping strategies

A wide variety of coping strategies have evolved to help communities deal with the above challenges. Most of them were reactive to situations beyond the control of the fishing communities and it became clear that institutions (such as the household, women's groups,

education, family planning, local law making, etc.) formed the basis of many of these strategies (see right-hand column in Table 1).

Social strategies often involved attempts to deal with attitudinal issues that contributed to challenges. Gender awareness training, family planning and anti-stigmatisation campaigns were noted as strategies which were helping to change attitudes, create awareness and remove the barriers to working on women's issues or issues related to AIDS/HIV and family planning.

Economic strategies were greatly in evidence. Credit schemes are in place but the history of their successful operation is not good. Nigeria [29] has put in place a tontine (a traditional credit scheme) and in Gambia [24] credit unions have been established and have had moderate success, although there is still a need to institutionalise credit and bring about the level of cultural change that will allow women to borrow money without their husband's permission. New technology was being used in Niger where households have begun small-scale aquaculture projects to supplement fishing during the lean season and as a reaction to prolonged drought [25].

Institutional strategies often involved engaging with other institutions or fostering the change of community institutions. There was much evidence of communities that had engaged with regional/district-level government to lobby for changes to help protect livelihoods: such lobbying involved requested that laws be upheld, that new laws be written to protect fishing livelihoods and that better enforcement be provided. These issues surfaced particularly when considering the impact of migration and displacement on communities and the impact of conflict. Maiga and Mama Na-Any described how in Niger women were able to gain access to local community governance structures and change them to meet positive ends—thus improving the gender balance [25]. Likewise women in The Gambia had been able to move into management roles [24]. There was evidence that local communities had also worked together to change circumstances—in one instance [26] the community had come together to buy a boat that could be used to patrol the local waters to help reduce conflict and ensure that laws and by-laws were obeyed. In Guinea Conakry community based monitoring was being used to encourage and monitor better fishing practices along the coast [24].

7. Some possible policy interventions

Many of the challenges identified at the workshop were symptomatic of some deep-rooted and long-term problems; it was acknowledged that any recommendations needed to address these underlying causes rather than just tackling the symptoms.

An interesting aspect of the recommendations is the lack of direct reference to the resource base. There are a number of possible explanations for this. First, women have, in general, little access to the process or mechanism that manages the resource. Thus, their focus, traditionally, has been less on the resource base and more on the down-stream aspects of the resource (processing, marketing and so on). This is not to suggest that they have no interest in the resource base (which, after all, is often the mainstay of their livelihood), but merely that their ‘gendered space’ has located itself down stream of this in those areas over which they may exercise some influence. A second possible explanation is that the recommendations that came out of the workshop are a true reflection of the ‘sustainable livelihoods’ framework. The participants at the workshop either worked directly in or with communities that fish and are thus well aware that in fact there are no true ‘fishing livelihoods’ but rather a variety of activities (including fish processing) that together make up a ‘livelihood’.

The workshop identified the following key areas that needed to be targeted in order to improve the role of gender in the development process within fishing-dependent communities:

Education and institutional support needs addressing on a number of fronts: basic literacy for women which will allow them to engage and interact better with institutions and organisations that hold decision making roles; numeracy skills which will enable women to run their businesses better and more efficiently; entrepreneurial skills that will allow alternative economic activities to be explored with more confidence; fisheries management training which will enable women to make decisions alongside men on how their fisheries are managed. Finally, institutional training will enable more effective and sustainable institutions to be established to promote gender equity and conflict management and resolution skills need to be widely disseminated. Support mechanisms that enable communities to withstand the disruption of migration and displacement will greatly help the balance of responsibilities on gender in communities. Advocacy training to build the ability to lobby against undesirable changes would enable women (and men) to protect their own communities in the face of large-scale projects such as dams. Likewise, improved advocacy will enable communities to work together better to withstand powerful outside forces.

Economic diversification strategies need to be put in place but the possible consequences of these strategies on gender relations (see end note ii) need careful consideration. Encouraging *mechanisms which contribute to greater social security* such as savings schemes that can be used to guard against lean times, old-age, and disasters and thus reduce the disparity of respon-

sibilities carried between men and women. *Improved food security* and living conditions such as improved facilities at landing sites, processing sites, and markets will contribute to the overall well being of the community and is of particular concern to women who make most use of these sites.

But the workshop found that before any of the above policy recommendations could be put in a place, a number of fundamentals needed to be addressed.

Data collection recommendations: Whilst participatory gender analysis at the community level has been started in many countries in the region, this level of analysis, disaggregated by gender is still rare; improvements to the collection of gender data both at the community and the national level is needed in order that real inroads to gender equity can be made. Likewise a systematic institutional analysis of the level of organisation of women in particular, but also of mixed-gender management organisations is needed. Tools for evaluation and monitoring of gender-based projects are needed so that lessons can be learned and experiences shared more fruitfully. The development of a data base on social and gender aspects of livelihoods at ministry level was considered important to ensure that real progress is made in livelihoods development by incorporating gender aspects at every possible opportunity. All countries noted that fisheries data is often aggregated with other agricultural activities making it very difficult to establish the real picture of the nature of development in artisanal fisheries and of the roles and contribution of women within those fisheries.

Recommendations to strengthen institutional capacity: The promotion of a gender focal point (at the Ministerial level, for example) was acknowledged as important as was the creation of forums at the national level to promote the importance of gender equity to development goals. More attention should be paid to ensuring that multinational companies in general, and third country fishing parties in particular are bound over to observe codes of conduct that will contribute to, and thus ensure, the equitable development of artisanal livelihoods in the countries involved (thus impacting upon the livelihoods of women).

Finally, knowledge about how information and influence flows between the micro and macro management level is also not widely understood. Communication channels need to be understood so that recommendations from the grassroots may reach the higher decision making layers and policy from the macro level is evenly applied at the micro level. Much of this comprehension should arise from a thorough diagnosis of gender roles and needs at the various levels. However, it was also noted that improvements to institutions (as recommended above) would also help improve the communication between the policy makers and the policy enforcers and the beneficiaries of such policy.

8. Conclusions

Policy interventions in pursuit of creating sustainable livelihoods in fisheries-dependent coastal communities need to be mindful of the role of gender in the development process. Improving how fisheries data are collected and how such data are disaggregated was identified as an important move towards improving policy effectiveness. The fisheries sector has often taken a lead from the agricultural sector on a number of methodological issues and it would be useful if the catching/processing functions within the ‘family unit’ were recognised to the same degree that they are in the small-scale farming sector.

The role of institutions came across strongly. The workshop noted that the role of institutions—long acknowledged as important to the development process—can prove to be an effective entry point for policy measures. The workshop demonstrated how targeting the fundamental institutional needs of a community (literacy, advocacy and organisational skills) might have a significant impact on the ability of the community to manage its fisheries resources more efficiently through the inclusion of all actors (men and women) in the process. The workshop, however, was limited in time and a number of interesting, unanswered, questions arose: What is the economic relationship between the catching and processing sectors? How do gender relations influence issues of cost and value that help reinforce the family unit’s catching and processing role in the face of new market competition? Do we know enough about cost and earnings functions in artisanal markets to enable us to understand gendered market relations? In conclusion, therefore, fisheries development policy needs to look beyond the resource to the stakeholders and to recognise the complex balance of roles between fishers and processors in the sector.

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