



Food and Agriculture
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United Nations



Towards gender-equitable small-scale fisheries governance and development

A handbook

In support of the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines
for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries
in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication

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Prepared by Nilanjana Biswas
International Collective in Support of Fishworkers

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Preparation of this document

This document was developed through a participatory process initiated by FAO, following a series of regional consultations on the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) during which a request for more information on how to address gender issues, in particular women's empowerment in small-scale fisheries emerged. The International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) carried out the preparation process, including the gathering of case studies and illustrative examples of small-scale fishing communities and government agencies from all over the world, to highlight and interpret the principles and recommendations of the SSF Guidelines in ways that promote gender equality. An online survey as well as two regional workshops (one in Costa Rica and one in Senegal) gathered input from people who have worked with the sector for many years – from government, civil society organizations (CSOs), research and academia, and regional organizations and Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) – to inform the draft prepared by Nilanjana Biswas. The final draft was reviewed through an “Expert workshop on gender-equitable small-scale fisheries in the context of the implementation of the SSF Guidelines” held in Rome on 26–28 November 2016, involving researchers, academics, government representatives, and representatives of NGOs and CSOs from various countries.

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¹ Report available at www.fao.org/3/a-i6947e.pdf

Abbreviations and acronyms

AIDS

Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome

ANP

Articulação Nacional das Pescadoras

BLC

Boat License Certificate

BMU

Beach Management Unit

BOBLME

Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystems

CAOPA

African Confederation of Artisanal Fishing Professional Organizations

CEDAW

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

COFI

Committee on Fisheries

CPP

Conselho Pastoral dos Pescadores

CRZ

Coastal Regulation Zone

CSOs

Civil society organizations

MCS

Monitoring, control and surveillance

FAO

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

FIFEL

Fédération Interrégionale des femmes du Littoral

GAP

Global Assistance Programme

GEF

Global Environment Facility

HIV

Human immunodeficiency virus

HRBA

Human rights-based approach

IBAMA

Instituto Brasileiro do Meio Ambiente e dos Recursos Naturais Renováveis

ICSF

International Collective in Support of Fishworkers

IUU

Illegal, unreported and unregulated (fishing)

JITCO

Japan International Training Cooperation Organization

KWDT

Katosi Women's Development Trust

LANWOFI

Latin American Network of Women Working in Fisheries

LIFDC

Low-income food-deficit country

LVFO

Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization

MBKMMVS

Marol Bazar Koli Mahila Mase Vikreta Sanstha

MER

Marine Extractive Regions

NGO

Non-governmental Organization

NGT

National Green Tribunal

OECD

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PARA

Paragraph of the SSF Guidelines

RFLP

Regional Fisheries Livelihood Programme for South and Southeast Asia

SDGs

Sustainable Development Goals

SEWA

Self Employed Women's Association

SHG

Self-Help Groups

SSF

Small-scale fisheries

SSF Guidelines

Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication

TAFREN

Task Force for Rebuilding the Nation

TBL

Triple Bottom Line

UN

United Nations

ILO

International Labour Organization

IQ

Individual quota

ITQ

Individual transferable quota

UNDP

United Nations Development Programme

VCA

Value chain analysis

WIF

Women in Fisheries

Why this handbook?

The Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) are the first internationally negotiated document dedicated specifically to the small-scale fisheries sector (see Box 1). The Guidelines represent a global consensus on principles and guidance for small-scale fisheries governance and development (FAO, 2016d).

Notably, the principles of gender equity and equality are upheld as fundamental guiding principles in the SSF Guidelines. This represents a significant achievement towards women's empowerment.

At the same time, it also represents an opportunity for governments to meet important goals related to social and economic equity and equality, environmental sustainability, and local food security, including relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

During consultations and capacity development events organized in the context of the SSF Guidelines implementation process, various stakeholders expressed the need for specific gender guidance in support of the application of the Guidelines.

This document, *Towards Gender-Equitable Small-Scale Fisheries – A handbook* In support of the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (henceforth the “handbook”), was developed to support gender-equitable small-scale fisheries by enhancing the understanding of their gender dimensions, with a focus on the specific role and conditions of women in the small-scale fisheries sector.

Box 1: What are the SSF Guidelines?

Officially adopted by the member countries of FAO at the Thirty-first Session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in June 2014, the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (popularly known as the SSF Guidelines) is the first internationally negotiated instrument to deal specifically with small-scale fisheries (SSF) and the social and economic aspects of fisheries governance in the sector. The Guidelines are global in scope but focus specifically on the needs of developing countries, where SSF tend to be concentrated. They promote a human rights-based approach (HRBA), and address all the activities undertaken by both men and women in marine and inland waters along the entire fish value chain. While the Guidelines recognize the important linkages that exist between small-scale fisheries and aquaculture, their primary focus is on marine and inland capture fisheries.

Why are the SSF Guidelines important for gender equality?

The principles of gender equity and equality are core objectives and guiding principles of the SSF Guidelines. Chapter 8 (Gender equality) of the Guidelines calls for concerted efforts on the part of all stakeholders to include gender equality as an integral part of all small-scale fisheries development strategies. In addition to this, gender considerations are frequently addressed elsewhere throughout the text.

While the guiding principles of gender equity and equality address this concept directly, every guiding principle underpinning the SSF Guidelines also lends support, either directly or indirectly, to the concept of gender equality. For instance, the guiding principle of Human Rights and Dignity may not make direct mention of gender, but it explicitly draws upon the international human rights standards of, *inter alia*, universality, equality and non-discrimination, which cannot be upheld in violation of gender equality. Similarly, while the guiding principle of Consultation and Participation makes no direct reference to gender, it can be meaningfully implemented only by ensuring democratic participation, including the participation of women, in decision-making processes. In contrast, the guiding principle of Respect of Cultures makes explicit reference to Article 5 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), in recognition that cultural practices may, in certain cases, be oppressive to women and in need of change.

The SSF Guidelines are voluntary and not binding upon States. However, when read together with other international conventions and standards upholding fundamental rights of peoples (including gender and human rights) that States are often signatories to, the SSF Guidelines provide direction for States to fulfil their full range of duties and responsibilities towards the small-scale fisheries sector. They also represent a fulcrum for women in the sector to leverage their demands.

Target audience

This handbook illustrates how to apply the provisions of the SSF Guidelines to promote gender equity and equality in all aspects of the small-scale fisheries sector. It focuses on the specific responsibilities of States and all other stakeholders to implement policies and plans that help promote gender equality, while also supporting the sector's growth and sustainability. It is primarily intended for use by policy-makers and public institutions in their design and implementation of fisheries-related policies and programmes, and by fishing communities and their organizations.

- › Governments have a key responsibility to ensure the implementation of the SSF Guidelines at the national and local level, and to incorporate the principles of the SSF Guidelines at every level, not only in the context of fisheries but also in terms of overall socio-economic development. Government agencies can use this handbook to understand human rights issues in the small-scale fisheries sector, and to implement the provisions of the SSF Guidelines effectively to promote gender equity and equality.
- › Fisher/fishworker and civil society organizations in small-scale fisheries are primary drivers of change in the sector and play a decisive role in pushing for "bottom-up" decision-making and development (FAO, 2015b). Small-scale fishing communities and their organizations could use this handbook in their dialogue with States for specific gender-just laws and legislation; for the inclusion of gender rights in policies and programmes; and to develop campaign strategies around gender rights.

Having said this, the handbook may also be useful for other actors, including academia and research organizations, intergovernmental organizations and Non-governmental Organizations, who have a role to play in supporting, strengthening, supplementing and documenting efforts to strengthen gender equity and equality within the small-scale fisheries sector.

How is this handbook structured?

The handbook is organized into three parts:

- > [PART 1](#) briefly explains the concepts of gender and gender mainstreaming, followed by a description of women's work and roles in the small-scale fisheries sector.
- > [PART 2](#) provides guidance related to the thematic areas of Part 2 of the SSF Guidelines: Responsible fisheries and sustainable development.
- > [PART 3](#) provides guidance related to Part 3 of the SSF Guidelines: Ensuring an enabling environment and supporting implementation.

For ease of reference, this handbook follows the structure of the SSF Guidelines. Its chapters are not intended to be stand-alone modules, as they are all interconnected and reflect the different dimensions associated with gender issues in small-scale fisheries. Therefore, it is recommended to read through the whole handbook once, and then refer to specific chapters based on the needs of each particular context in which the handbook is used.

Three sections of this handbook are of particular significance and should always inform the reading and use of the other chapters:

- > Part 1 on [Understanding gender and the role of women in small-scale fisheries](#), which briefly explains the term “gender” in relation to the roles and contributions of women in small-scale fisheries, thus providing the foundation for a gendered understanding of the SSF Guidelines; and
- > Chapters 6 ([Gender equality](#)) and 11 ([Implementation support and monitoring](#)), which provide overarching guidance to complement the theme-specific guidance of the other chapters.

This handbook makes extensive use of case studies to illustrate representative scenarios from small-scale fisheries across the globe, highlighting the issues and challenges faced by women in small-scale fisheries. The specific responsibilities of States and all other stakeholders for implementing policies and plans that help promote gender equality, while also helping to promote the sector's growth and sustainability, are also highlighted.

Each case study is followed by an analysis of the context and lessons learned and by possible action points for government and for civil society organizations. These action points are not exhaustive and will vary based on region and context. Similarly, each chapter is followed by key recommendations for government and civil society organizations. These are in no way intended to be prescriptive, as the great diversity and regional variation in the lives and livelihood conditions of women in small-scale fisheries make it impossible for any particular strategy or answer to fully apply across all situations. Rather, they are intended to provide practical examples, and to stimulate discussion in order to define meaningful and effective implementation goals according to the specific needs of women and men in each local context.

Relevant paragraphs of the SSF Guidelines are indicated throughout the handbook.

PART

1



Understanding gender and the role
of women in the small-scale fisheries

1. Understanding gender

The SSF Guidelines themselves do not offer a definition of the term “gender”. However, it is very important that we understand what we mean when we use this term.

Gender refers to socially constructed attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female. It has to do with how society defines masculinity and femininity in terms of what is appropriate behaviour for men and women. The social construction of gender begins at the moment of birth. From this moment on, a newborn declared “male” begins the journey of socialization into masculinity – becoming first a “boy” and then a “man”; while a “female” newborn begins to learn, through a complex arrangement of norms, taboos, rights and duties, what it means to be feminine in her culture – becoming first a “girl” and then a “woman”². Biological distinction is thus transformed into social identity, and “gender” is created.

Gender is a source of power (or powerlessness) in any society or culture. Because societies and cultures change, the power associated with gender also changes. When it interacts or intersects with other sources of power, such as class, race, religion or sexuality, the power associated with gender may increase or decrease. Therefore, across societies and cultures, there is considerable and complex variability between men and women in terms of their privileges and responsibilities. Rich women enjoy privileges that poor women do not. The same may be said of women with different skin tones. A woman belonging to a majority religious group might enjoy certain freedoms and privileges that a man from a minority religious group within the same society might not.

However, while gender expresses itself differently in different social contexts, it is equally the case that certain patterns in the expression of gender repeat themselves. Within any stratum or layer of a given society, be it within fishing communities, say, in Indonesia, or within small-scale fishing enterprises in France, women generally have fewer privileges, fewer rights, more domestic responsibilities, and less of a voice in socio-economic and political decision-making than their male counterparts do.

The homogeneity of gender dynamics across social and cultural contexts points to a system of social structures and practices which privileges men over women. This system permits inequality between men and women and, in principle, usually allows men more control over significant aspects of women’s lives, such as sexuality, reproduction, and labour and other resources (Nayak, 2005). This control is sanctioned through a vast array of social structures, institutions, norms and practices, including often gender-blind laws, policies and customs, and also various forms of violence. All these factors are key determinants of the distribution of responsibilities and resources between men and women. In fishing communities, a significant means through which this control is exercised is the gender division of labour. The division of labour in fishing communities often follows traditional patterns with specific tasks assigned to women and men. However, this division is dynamic, as gender roles are constantly shaped and negotiated, and they vary by regions and farming systems and with the changing

² Many States in official documents and forms offer a third alternative – “Other” – to accommodate transgender and intersex identities. The SSF Guidelines however refer to only two categories: man and woman. The present discussion on gender is therefore confined to these two categories.

conditions (seasons, markets and climate). In most developing countries, women work longer hours than men when both paid and unpaid work are taken into consideration. Much of women's work is dedicated to domestic tasks that are less visible and unpaid, as well as to low productivity subsistence farming, besides the time they dedicate to social and community duties.

With this meaning of gender in mind, this handbook focuses on the role of women and their situation in small-scale fisheries. Women in the sector are not an entirely homogenous category of people; they have different capacities, capabilities and levels of power. In some cases, women in fact own boats and finance fishing operations that employ men. However, in the vast majority of cases, women are subject to various degrees of inequalities in terms of access to and control over productive resources, services, employment opportunities, and participation and power in decision-making. This handbook aims to reduce existing inequalities by balancing the relationship between men and women in small-scale fisheries, and recognizing women as important partners in development.

Table 1: Understanding gender-related terminology

Gender	Gender refers not to male and female, but to masculine and feminine - that is, to qualities or characteristics that society ascribes to each sex. People are born female or male, but learn to correspond to those societal expectations. Perceptions of gender are deeply rooted, vary widely both within and between cultures, and change over time. But in all cultures, gender determines power and resources for females and males.
Gender equality	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.
Gender equity	Gender equity means fairness and impartiality in the treatment of women and men in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities. At times, special treatment/affirmative action/positive discrimination is required.
Gender analysis	Gender analysis is the study of the different roles of men and women in order to understand what they do, what resources they have, and what their needs and priorities are. It provides the basis for addressing inequalities in policies, programs, and projects, and it can be conducted at multiple levels (household, community and national), across different life stages and in the various roles men and women play.

Source: FAO, [Why gender](#) website.

Gender division of labour in small-scale fisheries

The gender division of labour in small-scale fisheries is based on the predominant perception of women as caregivers, associated with their tasks in the domestic or private sphere, and men as wage earners, associated with the external world or public sphere. By virtue of this perception,

one type of activity across regions, the act of fishing – which is usually performed by men – has come to be recognized and valued as work. Indeed, the fisheries sector is commonly regarded as a male domain. Much of the fisheries-related work that women perform is traditionally considered an extension of domestic work, and thus is undervalued in the economic sense.

Consequently, women’s work in the fisheries sector is usually overlooked or under-represented in official statistics. This leads to a vicious cycle where lack of sex-disaggregated data gives rise to gender-blind policy-making, which in turn translates into inadequate funding for the economic sectors that women are concentrated in. Starved of resources, women’s work is further marginalized and undervalued, and therefore likely to be further discounted. This impasse is captured in [Figure 1](#).

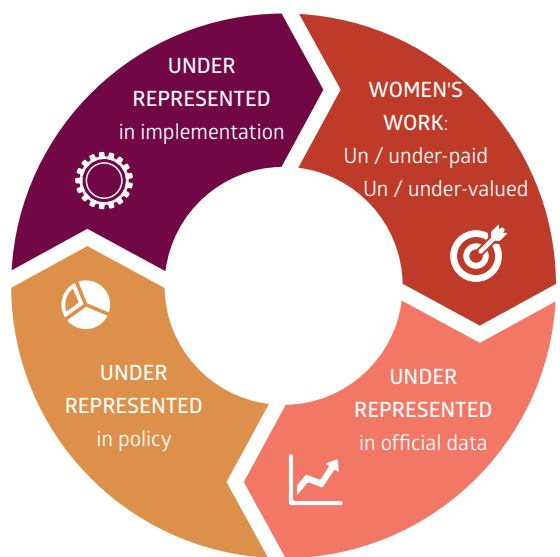
Gender mainstreaming and the small-scale fisheries sector

In small-scale fishing communities, gender inequality is often sustained through various structures and institutional practices at various levels, ranging from community customs that reinforce restrictive gender norms to national policies that marginalize women in the sector. These structures and practices however are not intractable; they yield to pressure and influence, and change over time. Likewise, the manifestation of gender inequality also changes from one historical moment to the next. This suggests that gender-discriminatory laws, policies, customs and practices may be challenged, and that all the institutional arrangements that make up a society, from marriage and family to policy and governance (as well as the institutional practices that flow out of them) may be subjected to scrutiny and transformation in order to eventually root out gender inequality. This idea lies at the core of the concept of gender mainstreaming.

Gender mainstreaming is thus a strategy for achieving the broader goal of gender equality. In [Chapter 8](#), the SSF Guidelines call upon all parties to recognize gender mainstreaming as “an integral part of all small-scale fisheries development strategies.” Given that the manifestation of gender inequality is never uniform across societies, the SSF Guidelines recommend that gender mainstreaming be adapted using “different approaches in different cultural contexts”. At the same time, they also recommend that “practices that are discriminatory against women” within diverse cultural contexts be challenged.

The definition of gender mainstreaming (see [Defining gender mainstreaming](#)) suggests that it is a process and not a one-time activity. It involves a continuous assessment of the impact of government legislation, policies and programmes (or interventions by aid agencies and civil society organizations) on the lives of recipients. At every step, important questions need to be asked: Are development programmes addressing areas of women’s employment and concerns? Are new policy initiatives for women being matched with adequate budget

Figure 1: Women’s work and the cycle of invisibility



allocations? Are cuts in social security spending nullifying the gains of new policy initiatives for women?

Although increasing the level of participation of women in public life and decision-making is an important gender mainstreaming goal, it is important to note that gender mainstreaming is not simply about fitting women into the existing order. If certain institutions and institutional practices need to be overhauled to ensure gender equity, merely recruiting more women into those institutions alone will fail to address this goal. Thus, gender mainstreaming goes beyond a toolkits-and-checklists approach and may demand systemic changes to existing institutions and institutional practices.

Gender equality mainstreaming can be successfully put in place only if it addresses both women and men. Is the community leadership all male? Are fisheries associations sensitive to the specific needs and requirements of their women members? Will men help with household work if women go out to earn an income or to assume community leadership roles?

Gender mainstreaming must also directly address biases that exist within all implementing organizations. If a fishing community deals with government organizations, the government officers themselves have to be involved in the efforts to achieve gender equality.

Table 2: Defining gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming	Gender mainstreaming is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's and men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality and equity.
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Source: ECOSOC, 1997.

2. Women in small-scale fisheries

It is estimated that 98 percent of all fishers and fish farmers live in developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Together, they produce more than half of the world's annual marine fish, and supply most of the fish consumed in the developing world (Berkes *et al.*, 2001). Out of this, women make up an estimated 47 percent of workers, accounting for around 56 million jobs along the fisheries supply chain, primarily in post-harvest activities like processing and trading (World Bank, 2012).

Box 2: Small-scale fisheries

What in international practice is referred to as the small-scale fisheries sector is in fact characterized by great diversity in terms of physical attributes, ownership of craft and gear, fishing patterns and range, the social structure of the fishing enterprise, and economic imperatives such as market orientation and income. It presents a picture of contrasts not only across countries but often also across regions within the same country. For example, the West coast of India is more productive than the East coast. Consequently, the small-scale fisheries sector on the West coast is more capital-intensive, with greater investments in craft and gear, while on the poorer East coast the sector is less capital-intensive and productive. The issues affecting women on the two Indian coasts are therefore very different. Along the West coast, women in post-harvest face challenges due to the centralization of fish landings in modern harbours; on the East coast, they are increasingly being pushed out of the fisheries sector altogether, with the added burden therefore of having to seek new livelihood options (Salagrama, 2012).

Mindful of this diversity, the SSF Guidelines refrain from advocating a single definition of what constitutes small-scale fisheries, leaving it to be defined according to local contexts. Significantly, this flexibility leaves room for women to intervene so that the small-scale fisheries sector in their local context is defined in ways that take into account the full range of activities that they perform.

[Figure 2: Women's work, gender issues and the SSF Guidelines](#) provides an overview of the roles of women in the small-scale fisheries sector³ in developing countries. It highlights the dynamic changes taking place in the sector, the impact of these changes on women, and how the SSF Guidelines relate to the changing realities of women's lives. It also helps to demonstrate the important role of women and the immense potential that they bring, not only to the sector but to the wider economy and society as well.

³ An FAO Working Group on Small-Scale Fisheries, while agreeing that it would be inappropriate to formulate a universally applicable definition for a sector as dynamic and diverse as small-scale fisheries, came up with a definition on the basis of the range of characteristics likely to be found in any particular small-scale fishery. See FAO (2003).

Home: in the diagram, the domestic space is labelled “home”. Women’s work in this space includes:

- › Domestic work, such as household chores (like cooking and cleaning) and caregiving – including not only child care, but also caring for the sick and elderly, which can involve up to four extra hours of daily work for women (Montfort, 2015);
- › Pre-harvest work, including tasks such as collecting and preparing bait, mending nets, preparing food for fishing trips, and maintaining books and accounts;
- › Post-harvest work, including tasks carried out at home, such as cleaning, sorting or processing fish.

The fisheries-related tasks that women perform in this sphere are usually regarded merely as an extension of housework, and therefore ignored in official data collection on unpaid labour.

The issues and concerns of women in the domestic sphere are addressed in [Chapter 4: Social development, employment and decent work](#) of the SSF Guidelines, including the right to have access to basic services, affordable housing, safe drinking water, nutritious food, social security and savings, credit, insurance, and other services. The chapter seeks to valorize all aspects of work along the fish value chain. This is of crucial significance, given that women’s work in the sector is largely unpaid or underpaid.

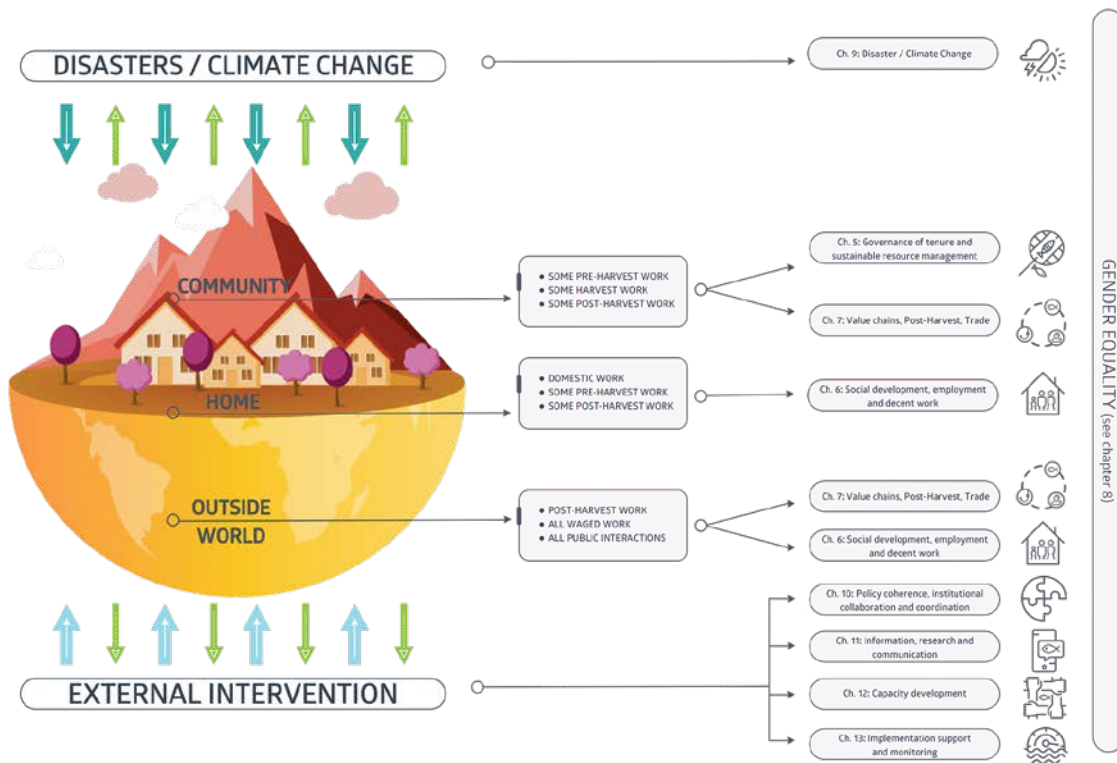
Importantly, the household is often also a site of domestic violence and abuse, usually sanctioned by patriarchal norms. [Chapter 6](#) of the SSF Guidelines addresses this issue, calling for institutional measures to eliminate such violence.

Community: depicted next in the diagram is the community space. This is where women often perform the bulk of their fisheries activities, including:

- › Pre-harvest work, such as collecting and preparing bait, mending nets, and repairing dugouts, canoes and other boats. These forms of work are not reflected in official statistics.
- › Harvest work: If fisheries and aquaculture are considered together, about 19 percent of the harvest workforce is female (FAO, 2016c). In some countries, for example Benin, the Congo, Mali, Cambodia and Thailand, women use boats to fish on lakes (FAO, WorldFish and World Bank, 2008). Significant numbers of poor women catch shrimp in coastal areas (FAO, WorldFish and World Bank, 2008). In many countries of Central and South America, women glean molluscs in inland, intertidal and nearshore waters (ICSF, 2016e). In the Pacific Islands, women are estimated to account for 56 percent of annual small-scale fishery catches (Harper *et al.*, 2013). In most regions, women’s harvesting activities are a primary source of food and nutrition for their families.
- › Post-harvest work: Women in small-scale fisheries work predominantly in the post-harvest sector in various roles: selling and trading fish, processing fish (salting, drying, pickling, fermenting and smoking), or sorting trash fish at landing sites.

There is growing pressure on fishery resources as people increasingly turn to seasonal, part-time or full-time fishing for survival. This affects women’s traditional livelihood and threatens food security. Women’s activities are also greatly affected by changes in tenure and the erosion of coastal, lake and river waterfronts. In the SSF Guidelines, these concerns are most directly addressed under [Chapter 3: Governance of tenure in small-scale fisheries and resource management](#); they are also addressed in [Chapter 5: Value chains, post-harvest and trade](#).

Figure 2: Women's work, gender issues and the SSF Guidelines



The community can also be a site for crime and violence, particularly gender-based violence, and even more so when traditional community structures begin disintegrating under the influence of modernization. These issues are addressed in [Chapter 4: Social development, employment and decent work](#) of the SSF Guidelines.

Outside world: the outer sphere in [Figure 2: Women's work, gender issues and the SSF Guidelines](#) represents the world outside the community. This is the site for post-harvest work, wage labour and public interaction:

- > **Post-harvest work:** Women's engagement in this space has traditionally been in post-harvest roles such as fish marketing and trade. In many Asian countries, women sell fish door to door or at local markets. In many African countries too, large numbers of women engage in the fish trade, with some becoming successful entrepreneurs ("fish mummies") who may also own boats and hire male crew (FAO, WorldFish and World Bank, 2008; Jul-Larsen *et al.*, 2003).
- > **Wage labour:** The outside world or public sphere is where women are increasingly engaged in wage labour, including industrial fish processing, where they comprise 85.5 percent of the workforce (Montfort, 2015). Local resource depletion and lack of viable work options may also lead women to seek wage work locally, outside the fisheries sector, or to migrate to other regions.
- > **Public interaction:** As a consequence of development and modernization, women are leaving their traditional spaces – the household or the community – to engage in an ever-widening array of public interactions. In Latin America for example, women actively engage in a variety of activities including inspection, quality control, reporting of statistical data, teaching, and conducting research (Pereira, 2002).

Developments in international trade and the process of modernization, in terms of both technological advancements in the fisheries sector and overall societal changes, directly affect women's engagement in the public sphere. These issues are dealt with in [Chapter 5: Value chains, post-harvest and trade](#) of the SSF Guidelines.

The small-scale fisheries sector is undergoing a period of rapid change, with traditional fishing under considerable stress in many fishing areas. Both women and men are being pushed into new roles – one important role being that of the wage worker, for example in fish processing factories. A primary requirement related to such work is regulation of the work space. In [Chapter 4: Social development, employment and decent work](#), the SSF Guidelines address many of the concerns related to the promotion of decent work and enhancement of livelihood opportunities.

The changes in the small-scale fisheries sector are increasingly forcing women to redefine or even change their traditional roles and corresponding power structures. They have to negotiate for more space within the household and domestic sphere in order to take on new livelihood options. They have to confront traditional barriers that block their freedom to perform new roles in fishing and related activities. In such situations, women also find themselves questioning the traditional community leadership. As women take on new roles, they confront patriarchal institutions, structures and practices that have been designed – and, if necessary, maintained even through the use of force and violence – to confine women to traditionally defined spaces. Addressing gender equity and equality becomes an urgent necessity in these circumstances. Gender equality is in fact a cross-cutting issue (as shown in Figure 2), impinging upon and influenced by changes that take place across the rest of the fisheries sector. [Chapter 6: Gender equality](#) of the SSF Guidelines specifically addresses these issues, and they should always be kept in mind when dealing with other thematic issues.

Fishing communities, and in particular coastal fishing communities, are faced with the immediate and growing threat of climate change and disasters. The burden of protecting their livelihood rights, while at the same time standing up against policies and practices that destroy their environment and their livelihood options, falls most directly upon these communities. Women, as key agents responsible for the resilience of small-scale fishing communities as well as for the reproductive work, have a leading role to play in climate change adaptation, ensuring climate justice, and disaster risk management. These issues are addressed in [Chapter 7: Disaster risks and climate change](#) of the SSF Guidelines.

Finally, communities are also the targets and recipients of many policy changes and developmental programme interventions from government and non-government agencies. Often, the impacts of policy interventions can be varied and unanticipated. Women are usually the most affected by changes within the community. Therefore, it is in their direct interest to be vigilant and organized regarding benefits from policy measures. In many parts of the world, women's struggles for change are an important part of the history of small-scale fisheries, whether for better infrastructural support, for democratic representation or for meaningful participation in decision-making and policy formulation processes in the sector. For policy-makers, the challenge is also to ensure that interventions are beneficial to all, and that they result in greater democracy among different sectors and between genders within the community.

The SSF Guidelines [Chapter 8: Policy coherence, institutional coordination and collaboration](#), [Chapter 9: Information, research and communication](#) and [Chapter 11: Implementation support and monitoring](#) address many of these concerns. Finally, [Chapter 10: Capacity development](#) addresses women's capacity needs and opportunities given the new challenges they face in a changing fisheries sector.

PART



Responsible fisheries and
sustainable development
through a gender lens



3. Governance of tenure in small-scale fisheries and resource management

a. Responsible governance of tenure

The term “tenure” refers to how rights to natural resources such as land, lakes, rivers, coasts and forests are assigned within societies. This includes rights that are held by individuals as well as collectively held tenure rights. The term “tenure right” in the SSF Guidelines is used in accordance with the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (FAO, 2012c).

The tenure rights of small-scale fishing communities are for the most part customary rights, practiced by the communities for many years, even generations. In most parts of the world, small-scale fishing communities have long-established rules and norms guiding their access to and control of fisheries/marine and inland resources. These are largely not documented. Moreover, in many countries, statutory legal systems have overlaid these customary systems with new laws, often ignoring the customary laws of the local community. This occurs even in national jurisdictions where States are signatories to human rights instruments that recognize customary rights.

Table 3: Defining tenure

Tenure	How people, communities and others gain access to land, fisheries and forests is defined and regulated by societies through systems of tenure. These tenure systems determine who can use which resources, for how long, and under what conditions. The systems may be based on written policies and laws, as well as on unwritten customs and practices.
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Source: FAO, 2012c.

In fisheries all over the world, there are different tenure regimes granting rights to access fish to individuals, groups, and (in some instances) communities. Irrespective of the type of tenure system that is adopted, it is important to note that the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (FAO, 2012b), together with the SSF Guidelines, promote preferential access to resources for small-scale fishing communities. There are other international instruments that protect the tenure rights of communities. For example, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples enshrines the collective as well as individual rights of indigenous peoples, stating that “[i]ndigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired,” and directing States to give legal recognition to these territories (UNDRIP, 2008).

For most fishing communities, the right to access fish and other livelihood resources, while very important, is not enough. Without secure access also to land – through which fishing grounds may be

accessed; where boats, nets and other gear may be parked; and where vital post-harvest activities, such as cleaning, sorting and drying, may be carried out – the right to access these resources loses its meaning. Further, fishery tenure may be easily undermined by the growth of competitive sectors in the area. Tenure, in the context of small-scale fisheries, therefore represents a combination of rights covering both land and water (FAO, 2013a). These rights would vary from one context to another, but when they are undermined by competitive claims from powerful sectors, including industrial fisheries and non-fishery interests, small-scale fishers and their communities typically run the risk of tenure loss. The SSF Guidelines (in **Para 5.9**) recognize this vulnerability, and in such situations specifically call upon States to extend special support to communities – “the weaker party” – with “special attention paid to women with respect to tenure rights”.

How effectively States are able to carry out this duty depends on the quality of governance in place. Weak governance systems lead to inadequate and insecure tenure, which in turn often leads to the loss of livelihood, housing, cultural and religious practices, and community support, as well as extreme poverty and hunger; it also undermines environmental sustainability (FAO, 2013a).

Two broad types of efforts are needed to make regulatory frameworks responsive to gender concerns with “special attention paid to women with respect to tenure rights”:

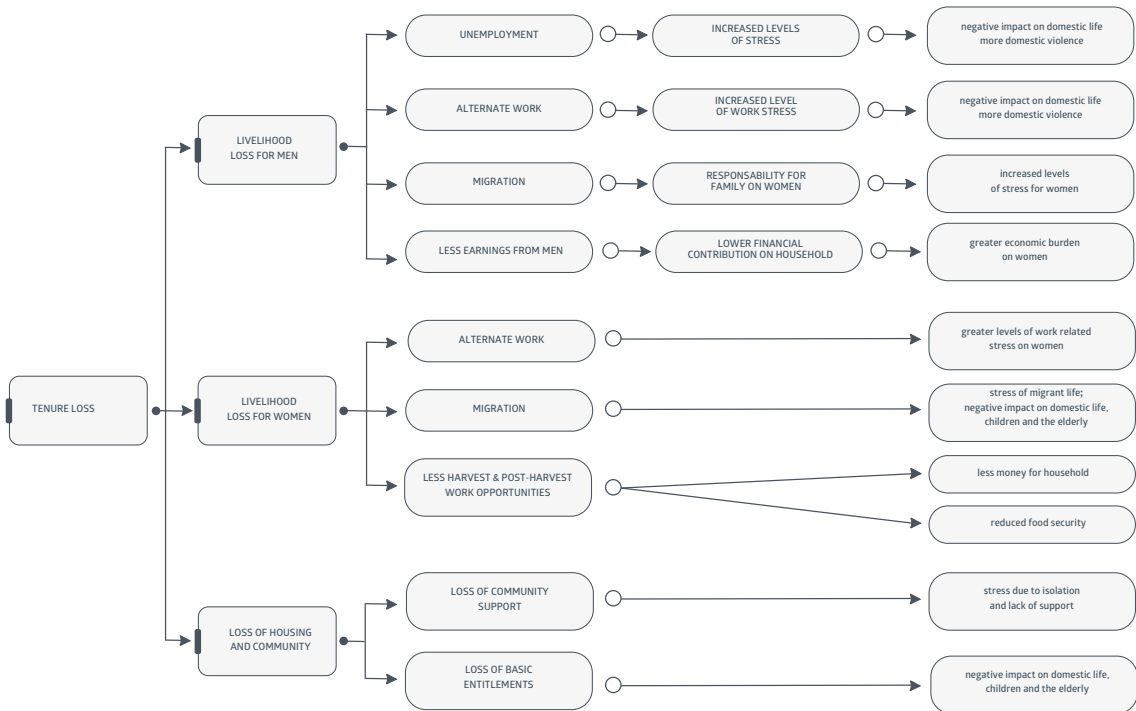
- › regulation of encroachment of space by non-SSF entities; and
- › granting preferential access for women within fishing communities.

Regulation of encroachment by non-SSF entities

Industrial and commercial interests are often able to use their superior access capabilities to encroach upon and gain legal ownership over common property and community fishery resources. Moreover, government regulatory agencies often support such transfers of ownership in the interest of economic growth, setting aside the customary rights of traditional fishing communities.

Loss of tenure for small-scale fishing communities has significant gender implications, as illustrated in [Figure 3: Gender impact of tenure loss](#). Since, apart from earning a livelihood, women bear the primary responsibility for household work and caregiving, tenure loss is particularly devastating for women and their families. Within small-scale fishing communities, women are always adversely affected in most situations of tenure loss, even if this is not immediately visible. Women in indigenous and small-scale fishing communities are usually well aware of this impact, which is why they are to be found at the forefront of initiatives to secure tenure rights worldwide.

Figure 3: Gender impact of tenure loss



Preferential access for women within fishing communities

The regulation of access to and use of natural resources, while necessary, is not a sufficient condition for gender-equitable tenure. For example, within small-scale fishing communities, the principle of universality which calls for access for all community members would require that the term “use”, with respect to tenure, be defined as inclusively as possible. In fact, traditional systems of fishing rights do not always promote meaningful roles for women in the community, and even in situations where access is open, social and cultural norms may limit the access of women (FAO, 2016a). Given existing gender inequalities within communities, the governance of use rights would have to be underpinned by special protection, positive discrimination and privileged access for women, as well as restrictions on use rights for more powerful members.

If tenure determines who can use which resources, for how long, and under what conditions (see [Table 3: Defining tenure](#)), then tenure can be considered as having three component functions:

- > the use of a resource;
- > the possession or ownership of the resource for a specified length of time; and
- > the transferability (or the right to transfer) of resource ownership or use to a new right holder.

The principles of gender equity and equality must be made to apply to each of these functions and associated rights.

Use rights

For women in small-scale fishing communities, use rights can become weak over time, as women are often not primary users with direct access to productive resource. In some countries, women do engage in direct fishing activities, but their numbers are few⁴. In many countries, women perform gleaning roles, gathering fish, shellfish and other species in intertidal and nearshore waters, which is critical to family food security and nutrition and may also generate some earnings (Weeratunge and Snyder, 2009). In most cases, women's post-harvest employment depends on access to fish caught by others such as husbands, other male fishers in the family or community, lakefront- or harbour-based auctioneers and traders, or (as in the case of a few countries in Africa) hired crew. Some of the power relations that determine women's access to fish are illustrated in the following case studies.

[Case study 1](#) discusses the impact of the development of industrial fish processing on women's use rights along the banks of Lake Victoria in the United Republic of Tanzania. Industrial fish processing in this case did not directly affect the community's right to fish; in fact, it increased fish demand and price. However, the net effect of the industrialization process was to progressively alienate women from post-harvest activities.

Case study 1: Women in fishing communities on Lake Victoria

Up until the late 1980s, before the advent of the international fish trade, the processing of various species of fish, including Nile perch (*Lates niloticus*), was a traditional activity of both men and women in fishing communities along Lake Victoria, in the United Republic of Tanzania. However, with the advent of commercial fishing, the ability of factories to pay higher prices for fish brought them into competition with women engaged in fish processing, who began to get pushed out of their trade. Initially, as factories did not accept undersized fish, women were still able to access the smaller-sized rejected catch. But better management measures in the late 1990s resulted in a ban on nets with mesh sizes of less than 5 inches, which meant that undersized fish was no longer available.

Women traditionally produced and sold two other types of fish products. The first was sun-dried fish bladders. However, as demand for these grew from soup makers in Asia and beer brewers in Europe, their trade became more lucrative and women found themselves progressively pushed out, with men often taking over the business in the communities. The second type of product was fish "racks" (made from the head and skeleton of the fish after being filleted in the fish factories, and locally known as punk) that were fried and sold in local communities by women. Here again, in the mid-1990s, larger commercial interests emerged, supported by the government and international agencies, to process the fish racks into fishmeal for use as feed. As legally harvested fish became inaccessible to the poor over the years, trade in small and illegally harvested fish, caught using small mesh gear, became the mainstay for small traders. Some women traders began staying overnight at beach seine fishing camps to be among the first to access the catch, but many dropped out of the fish trade altogether (Médard and Wilson, 1996; Médard, 2003).

⁴ See Lentisco and Lee (2015).

Let's analyse this...

The SSF Guidelines are clear that when a State allows commercial interests to operate in areas where there are traditional fishing interests, it is the State's responsibility to ensure that the rights of traditional communities are protected through proper impact analyses and consultative processes (**Para 5.10**). In addition, States should avoid policies that contribute to overfishing, and hence adversely impact upon small-scale fishing communities (**Para 5.20**). The potentially adverse impacts of commercial fishing and fish processing on small-scale fishing communities are illustrated by the Nile perch fishery development. **Para 5.9** further recognizes that small-scale fishing communities, in particular vulnerable and marginalized groups, are often weaker parties in conflict with other sectors, and thus may require special support. The right of women, as the more vulnerable group in small-scale fishing communities, to their traditional means of livelihood therefore deserves special protection.

Para 6.8 of the SSF Guidelines places responsibility on States and other stakeholders to support women's existing livelihoods and develop alternative income-generating opportunities. In this case, the importance of properly addressing the trade-offs between new opportunities provided by commercial utilization and the impact on traditional livelihoods is illustrated by the change in demand for the previously rejected fish racks, which provided important means of livelihood for women. Finally, **Para 7.7** calls upon States to ensure that international trade and export promotion do not adversely affect local food security. The reorientation of the Nile perch fishery had an impact on the local community's access to fish, including fish waste. It also increased the risk of illegal fishing – in particular by economically marginalized members of the fishing community, including women – which **Para 5.16** of the SSF Guidelines calls on States to eliminate.

Action points for policy-makers

1. Understand and collect data and information on women's roles and the nature of their work in fishing communities, through participatory processes that support informed policy-making.
2. Critically evaluate policy decisions pertaining to industrialization and trade in terms of the trade-offs and impact on women in fisheries.
3. Consider measures for compensating women's potential loss of livelihood as a result of industrialization and trade policies.

Action points for CSOs

1. Organize to effectively represent issues of women fishers and fishworkers in dialogue with government and other stakeholders.
2. In collaboration with women in the affected communities, prepare impact analyses of government policies on the small-scale fisheries sector to support informed policy-making.

In this case study, traditional small-scale fisheries processing was progressively marginalized through policies that favoured the industrial processing of Nile perch ⁵. The social and economic

costs associated with such marginalization, which included food insecurity and hunger, poverty intensification, disintegration of households and communities, growth of illegal fishing, and criminalization of fishers, were disproportionately borne by women. This underscores the need for special focus on women with respect to tenure rights, as called for in the SSF Guidelines.

In [Case study 2](#) a statutory body upheld the tenure rights of the fishing community of Juhu Moregaon village in Raigad, India. This intervention illustrates the successful application by the State of the principles embodied in the SSF Guidelines, even though the SSF Guidelines did not yet exist at the time. The gender implications of this case may not be obvious at first glance, but analysis reveals how the double burden of job loss and household insecurity primarily affects women.

Case study 2: Tenure rights of traditional fishing communities in Raigad, India

The Juhu Moregaon village of Raigad district, in the suburbs of Mumbai, India, is home to a traditional fishing community. In the 1980s, the land around the village was acquired by government agencies for public sector oil companies. The related construction activities caused tidal obstruction and reduced the width of the mouth of the creek, which the fishing community used to go out into the sea. The activities also polluted the creek and degraded the environment, leading to a reduction in fish catch. The community approached the National Green Tribunal (NGT) seeking various forms of relief, on the grounds of the destruction of their livelihoods and also the damage to the coastal ecology. The NGT, a specialized body set up by the State for the speedy and effective resolution of environmental disputes, ruled in favour of the fishing community, mandating that the companies provide compensation. This judgment sets a precedent which could be used by fishers in other districts where their livelihoods are threatened, and where the environment is gravely affected by the impacts of large development projects (Peke, 2016a).

Let's analyse this...

The SSF Guidelines place responsibility on the State for protecting the traditional tenure rights of fishing communities to publicly owned land and water resources (**Para 5.6**), including through the prevention of arbitrary eviction (**Para 5.9**). The deterioration of fishing resources can be seen as a form of eviction of fishing communities from their traditional livelihood sources. The SSF Guidelines also call upon States and other parties to evaluate social, economic and environmental impacts prior to project development (**Para 5.10**), a clause that, in this particular case study, places the onus of responsibility on the regional government as well as the companies. Further, the SSF Guidelines encourage States to rehabilitate fishing communities affected by grave human rights violations (**Para 5.12**).

⁵ According to Joyce Ikwaput Nyeko, Assistant Commissioner of Co-management, Directorate of Fisheries Resources, Uganda, not all women in Lake Victoria fisheries are marginalized; for instance, women dominate the downstream value chain in the big Mukene (*Rastrineobola argentea*) fishery (J. Ikwaput Nyeko, personal communication, 2016).

This case could be viewed as a grave violation of the human rights of the Juhu Moregaon village community, because the right of the women and their families to a decent life and livelihood depended substantially on the ability of the community to carry out fishing activities (see also [Figure 3: Gender impact of tenure loss](#)). The loss of community tenure rights also represents a loss of livelihood for the women in the Juhu Moregaon community engaged in fish processing and trade.

Action points for policy-makers

1. Ensure that strict environmental, social and economic impact analyses are carried out before proceeding with any large coastal and inland water body project.
2. Enforce the strict application of the “polluter pays” principle in cases of environmental damage by industry and other stakeholders.

Action points for CSOs

1. Together with suitable expert bodies, carry out independent studies to understand the environmental, social and economic impact of large projects on the lives and livelihoods of women fishers and fishworkers.
2. Gather and share information on similar situations, create networks among affected coastal communities, and organize campaign support for remedial action.

Ownership rights

The nature of marine and aquatic fishery resources – being both underwater and mobile – makes determining their ownership difficult, particularly in marine waters and rivers. Land ownership patterns, on the other hand, may be diverse. In many countries, land in coastal areas cannot be privately owned; in others, States may lease but not sell such land; and in yet others, community holdings are recognized (FAO, 2013a).

Where communally owned forms of tenure exist, these are increasingly being eroded in the context of modern development (FAO, 2013a). Women depend heavily upon common property and communally owned resources to access fish and other species for both income and for feeding their families, and are among the hardest hit when these resources are denied them.

However, even when communities possess legal tenure rights, these rights are not absolute and may be limited or revoked by States’ power of eminent domain – that is, the power to expropriate land. Growing competition over fishery resources and shifts in policy priorities may result in efforts to redistribute tenure through land expropriation.

The proposed expropriation of community lands of the Rama and Kriol people in [Case study 3](#) has direct bearing on women’s livelihoods. Since women’s fishing and harvesting activities are an important source of food, tenure loss would increase the likelihood of food insecurity and poverty among these already marginalized communities, exacerbating gender-based vulnerabilities.

Case study 3: Recognition of indigenous community-owned land in Nicaragua

In Nicaragua, the indigenous Rama and Kriol peoples received titles to their traditional land and sea territory in 2009 from the government, as a result of activism by the two communities which received international technical and campaign support. Women in these communities derive their livelihood from catching, processing and trading shrimp, oysters, clams and chacalines (Cambarellus). Besides gleaning, women sometimes fish for cichlids as well, though fishing is generally regarded as a male activity. Women's fishing and harvesting activities are an important source of food for their families. However, the important legal recognition of the territories of the Rama and Kriol now has to withstand emerging challenges. These include, for example, the development of the Nicaraguan Canal, free trade zones and associated infrastructure in the region (under a Special Law for the Development of Infrastructure and Transport: Law No. 840), with associated impacts on 52 percent of the indigenous peoples' lands (ICSF, 2016e).

Let's analyse this...

The Rama and Kriol communities were given legal title to their land. This is in compliance with SSF Guidelines **Para 5.4**, **Para 5.5** and **Para 5.6**, requiring States to respect and record legitimate tenure rights. In order to secure rights like these, the SSF Guidelines in **Para 5.4** enjoin States to respect and protect preferential access rights of ethnic and indigenous communities to fishery resources and land, consistent with international human rights law and the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. Through these safeguards, States are held responsible for preventing arbitrary eviction and infringement of tenure rights (**Para 5.9**). Further, in any large-scale development, States and other parties are required to consider social, economic and environmental impacts and to hold meaningful consultations with affected communities (**Para 5.10**) – in this case the Rama and Kriol communities, including the women – before implementing the project.

Action points for policy-makers

1. Ensure mandatory environmental, economic and social impact analyses of large projects with due attention to gender concerns, and compliance with national and international environmental laws.
2. Guarantee that industrial development does not infringe on the rights of indigenous communities, including those of their women members – especially the right to tenure and livelihood.
3. In cases of force majeure, where there is no alternative to displacement, ensure gender-equitable reparation in terms of equivalent territory and livelihood options.

Action points for CSOs

1. In cases like this where legal titles exist, ensure the safekeeping of all relevant legal documents pertaining to community rights.
2. Organize legal assistance and empowerment of communities and explore all legal avenues to prevent eviction.
3. Demand the legalization of customary tenure, including for women, where communities do not possess legal titles.

This case study illustrates the importance of tenure rights, including those for indigenous peoples, in allowing all members of traditional communities, including women, to derive a livelihood from fisheries resources. It also illustrates the need to secure these rights, including through the informed consent of communities and due attention paid to social, economic and environmental impacts of new developments in the same area. With regard to readjustment of land tenure and reallocation among small-scale fishing communities, FAO recommendations are as follows:

- Voluntary trade-offs respecting the principle of free, prior and informed consent should always be sought.
- Expropriation should only take place in extreme and justifiable cases as a last resort. Adequate compensation should be provided, taking lost social, cultural and economic values into consideration (FAO, 2013b).

The issue of resource ownership is usually more complicated for women, especially where multiple legal regimes exist in a given society. The coexistence of parallel systems based on customary, statutory and religious laws, referred to as legal pluralism, creates a situation where provisions governing tenure and use rights can and frequently do contradict each other. Such complex systems may have negative implications for gender-equitable tenure governance (FAO, 2013a). The entitlements granted by one set of laws may be invalidated by another; for example, the national law may grant both daughters and sons equal rights to property inheritance, but the community's customary law may grant this right only to sons. In such cases, the SSF Guidelines provide clear guidance: "Where constitutional or legal reforms strengthen the rights of women and place them in conflict with custom, all parties should cooperate to accommodate such changes in the customary tenure systems" (Para 5.4).

It would be important to examine whether best practices of gender-equitable tenure systems, where they exist, can be applied in other cases. For instance, in the Navedar Navagaon fishing village in Maharashtra (India), all fish processing activities take place on community land. The land

is divided among fishing families, and the use right is passed down to the daughters-in-law. Though these women can in turn rent out use rights to others, they can neither sell the land nor transfer its ownership (Peke, 2016b).

Transferability of tenure

An inherent component of most tenure rights is the right of transferability. This is useful, as it does not tie down the tenure holder to the right if she no longer wishes to exercise it. Transferability also can become an asset for the tenure holder in times of need. However, when applied to common property resources like common land or common access rights to fish, transferability can work against the interests of small-scale fishers and fishing communities.

The example of quotas is interesting in this regard. Access restrictions, using individual access rights and quotas, were initially introduced in developed countries to prevent overfishing; these were later often made transferable. The quota system resulted however in the progressive restriction of common property access, in many cases with a concentration of quotas held by a few companies, as well as a reduction in employment (see [Box 3](#)). Women, who primarily take part in post-harvest activities rather than in fishing directly, were often excluded from these use rights allocation processes.

The quota system was introduced in South Africa in 2005 in an effort to maximize the commercial potential of fisheries. However, this also caused distortions, such as challenges for subsistence fisheries; the elite capture of quotas due to imbalances of power and transparency; and a shift towards industrial harvesting of species traditionally caught by small-scale fishing communities, with an impact on their livelihoods, income and food security ⁶. For women, the monetization of use rights resulted in the restriction of access to traditional gleaning and fish drying areas, and of fish for processing or sales.

To reduce potential negative impacts on the livelihoods of small-scale fishing communities, permanent or long-term transfers within communities, households or families have been recommended, rather than fully tradable rights which facilitate the concentration of rights outside of small communities (FAO, 2013b)

Good practices also acknowledge and address social, economic or cultural factors that often either explicitly or implicitly reinforce male privilege in tenure systems when transfers of rights take place (FAO, 2016c). Attention needs to be paid to gender equity in matters of tenure transfer, giving due recognition and protection to the inheritance rights of women, particularly daughters.

⁶ See, for example, Isaacs (2013) and Sunde (2016).

Box 3: ITQs and the experience of Iceland

In Iceland, as a measure against overfishing, a system of individual quotas (IQs) was introduced in 1984. The quotas were assigned to boats of over 10 MT, based on their fishing catch of the previous three years. Smaller boats were excluded from the quota system. In 1991, the system was extended to all vessels of 6 MT and more capacity, with quota owners having the right to transfer quota shares. This system – the individual transferable quota (ITQ) system – led to quotas being concentrated in the hands of a small number of large companies. As women were not directly engaged in fishing, they were excluded from the system, despite their engagement in post-harvest activities. By 2014, employment in fishing and fish processing had decreased by 5.3 percent, from 12 percent in 1983. An allocation of quotas to regions or communities could have helped women maintain their livelihood.

Source: Skaptadottir and Proppe, 2005.

Conflicts and gender-equitable tenure rights

The tenuous nature of customary rights makes the restoration of these rights very difficult, particularly in situations of war and conflict. Gender equity is often forgotten in these situations, which are characterized by destruction, population displacement, competing claims, encroachment, and disputes over tenure. Further, as traditional fishing rights are often linked to patriarchal norms in communities, women who are widowed in conflict situations often find themselves doubly dispossessed.

[Case study 4](#) shows that even in cases where legal documentation exists, the absence of safe repositories and responsible State agencies makes it difficult for women to ensure the fulfilment of their rights. Reliable and safe instruments and mechanisms for recording the possession of tenure, such as publicly maintained rights registries and records as well as information and research services, are crucial in such contexts for effective governance (FAO, 2013b).

Para 4.2 of the United Nations Principles on Housing and Property Restitution for Refugees and Displaced Persons:

States should ensure that housing, land and property restitution programmes, policies and practices recognize the joint ownership rights of both male and female heads of the household as an explicit component of the restitution process, and that restitution programmes, policies and practices reflect a gender-sensitive approach.

Source: UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, 2005-2008.

Case study 4: War-affected women in the fishing villages of the Mannar Coast, Sri Lanka

The decades-long civil war in Sri Lanka left behind around 89 000 war widows. Many of them belonged to fishing communities in north and east Sri Lanka. Mannar Island is one of the severely war-affected areas. As of 2015, the fishing village of Shantipuram on Mannar had 450 families, of whom 75 were women-headed (60 widows and 15 women deserted by their husbands). The livelihood of these 75 women is extremely precarious. They earn a subsistence livelihood from fisheries for the six months of the year during which fishing takes place. During these months, the women dry and sell the fish that they receive from local fishermen as payment for helping with support activities, such as emptying, mending and cleaning fishing nets. During the remaining six months when fishing ceases, they find it extremely difficult to survive.

Many women had lost their homes and land when they fled the war. When they returned, they found their homes occupied by others, including the Sri Lankan Army. In many cases, legal titles had been lost, and it was impossible for the women to regain possession of their properties and rebuild their lives. The rehabilitation of internally displaced communities, including their women members, is therefore of prime importance during the period of recovery after a conflict (Quist, 2015).

Let's analyse this...

The SSF Guidelines call upon States to restore access rights for fishing communities displaced by armed conflict and natural disasters, and to ensure the elimination of any discrimination against women in tenure practices in such situations (**Para 5.12**). The SSF Guidelines can therefore help women to remind governments of their responsibility to rehabilitate internally displaced fishers. The Guidelines also call for the protection of the human rights and dignity of small-scale fisheries stakeholders so they can pursue their customary livelihoods, have access to customary fishing grounds, and preserve their way of life in situations of armed conflict (**Para 6.18**). **Para 6.3** calls for social security for workers in small-scale fisheries and for security schemes to be applied to the entire value chain; **Para 6.8** urges States and other stakeholders to support alternative income-generating opportunities; and **Para 5.11** calls for the effective resolution of disputes over tenure rights. All of these protective clauses can be used to strengthen the demand for immediate action by women suffering from the consequences of conflict and disasters.

Action points for policy-makers

1. Prepare a comprehensive rehabilitation policy for women affected by wars and other natural and human-induced calamities.
2. Rehabilitation policy measures for women affected by disasters should include, in particular: support for rebuilding housing and livelihoods; pensions for the disabled; and support for the education of children.

Action points for CSOs

1. Facilitate the formation of support organizations/networks for the rights of war-affected women.

Key recommendations: Responsible governance of tenure

For policy makers

Gender-equitable governance of fisheries tenure

- › In collaboration with women in fishing communities, identify, record and make available, both publicly and freely, sex-disaggregated data pertaining to:
 - the nature and extent of customary rights and entitlements of these communities, in both marine and inland fisheries;
 - the use of all publically owned fishery resources where these are used and managed by small-scale fishing communities, in both marine and inland fisheries.

Compliance with SSF Guidelines

- › Assess and revise national legal frameworks against the SSF Guidelines recommendations with regard to fisheries tenure governance and management.
- › Implement effective, protective and gender-equitable regulation to prevent arbitrary eviction and encroachment on the customary tenure rights of small-scale fishing communities.
- › Introduce necessary legal and policy reform to secure preferential access to marine and inland fisheries resources, and small-scale fishing areas and adjacent land, for women in small-scale fishing communities.

Project impact analyses

- › Conduct social, economic and environmental impact analyses of large-scale development projects on small-scale fishing communities, in ways that meaningfully and comprehensively reflect the voices and concerns of women engaged in pre-harvest, harvest, and post-harvest livelihoods.

Consultation

- › Ensure the full representation of women in effective and participatory consultations (through policy implementation if necessary) prior to the implementation of any large-scale development project that might have an impact on small-scale fishing communities.
- › Ensure access for women to timely, affordable and effective mechanisms for dispute resolution in small-scale fishing communities in the context of tenure-related disputes.
- › Maintain public tenure rights registries and records, as well as information and research services, reflecting sex-disaggregated data on use and possession of tenure rights.

Compensation

- › Ensure meaningful compensation of women's loss of tenure rights and livelihoods in fisheries due to industrialization, trade and other forms of large-scale development.
- › Enforce the application of the "polluter pays" principle in cases of environmental damage caused by industry and other stakeholders.

Tenure restitution

- Introduce (if necessary) or amend and implement policy to support special protection of, and positive discrimination for, tenure restitution for women in the context of disasters and/or armed conflict.

Capacity development on gender-equitable tenure

- Ensure staff at all organizational levels dealing with fisheries governance receive continuous training on gender-equitable tenure, and are recruited with due regard to ensuring gender and social equality.
- Create spaces for women fishworkers and their organizations, and civil society organizations as well, to participate in monitoring the implementation of gender-equitable tenure governance.

Key recommendations

For CSOs

- › Identify and enumerate female customary tenure right holders in local fishing communities, as well as the nature of their pre-harvest, harvest and post-harvest rights and entitlements.
- › Identify and record the type and forms of access women in communities have to publically owned fishery resources that are collectively managed by small-scale fishing communities.
- › Identify areas where existing legal or constitutional provisions strengthen the rights of women with respect to tenure, but are in conflict with customary practice.
- › Act as watchdogs to ensure that women in small-scale fishing communities are not discriminated against in livelihood-related policies and practices.
- › Work with women in fishing communities to form organizations and networks for those affected by tenure loss.
- › In the context of conflicts and/or disasters, set up forums and networks to help women in affected fishing communities with rehabilitation and restitution of tenure.

b. Sustainable resource management

Fisheries provide a vital source of food and employment as well as social and economic well-being for millions. If fisheries resources are to be sustained, fisheries activities must be conducted in a responsible manner. Traditional fishing practices may be more harmoniously aligned with environmental sustainability, but the current reality is that the small-scale fisheries subsector itself in many parts of the world is being forced to move towards unsustainable practices. Sustainable resource management is therefore an issue of critical concern for the small-scale fisheries sector. The responsibility of small-scale fishing communities extends to not only having control over tenure rights, but also managing fishing rights in a sustainable manner. States are duty-bound to facilitate this process by promoting appropriate management systems, providing relevant training and capacity development opportunities, and putting in place effective regulatory measures, paying particular attention to the equitable participation of women and other marginalized groups.

Women's participation in fisheries management

Responsible fisheries governance involves the participation of all stakeholders in fisheries management to ensure that the interests of small-scale fisheries – typically the weaker party – are democratically represented in all relevant processes. Given the vital contribution of women in small-scale fisheries, gender equity and equality considerations need to be taken into account to ensure sustainable resource management and allow women to play an active role as responsible resource stewards.

Many industrialized countries have adopted centralized and top-down management systems, including property rights-based management strategies, for the efficient management of fish stocks (Andrew and Evans, 2009). However, these systems seem inappropriate for developing countries, where the small-scale fisheries sector is marked by the prevalence of multi-use, multispecies diversity (Béné, Macfadyen and Allison, 2007), as well as having a key livelihood function. The alternative approach has been to prioritize human rights, rather than property-based rights, in the heart of fisheries management regimes (Civil Society Preparation Workshop, 2008). In many contexts, this has led to various forms of participatory management involving fishing communities formally or informally, including their women members, as illustrated in [Case study 5](#) from India.

Case study 5: Self-regulation by women harvesters in the Gulf of Mannar, India

The Gulf of Mannar National Park covers 21 islands off the State of Tamil Nadu in southern India. It is home to 35 000 fishers, of whom around 10 000 are women. The women collect seaweed and shells, harvest crabs, and engage in the related activities of processing fish, drying seaweed, selling fish and repairing nets.

The islands were declared protected areas in 1986. But with little regulation actually in effect, the women continued to pursue their fishing livelihoods. In 2002, with the establishment of the Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve Trust under a United Nations Development Programme – Global Environment Facility (UNDP-GEF) project, regulations began to be strictly enforced. A case study warned that restricting access would “add risks” to traditional fishing occupations by officially rendering them illegal (Whittingham, Campbell and Townsley, 2003). In order to find a solution, the women put in place an alternative set of voluntary guidelines. They declared a ban on several activities, including the destruction of coral reefs and coral collection, and the cutting of mangroves for firewood. Seaweed collection was restricted to 12 days per month.

They reached an agreement with the Forest Department to stop collecting species listed as protected under law. A guard from the community was appointed by the villagers to implement the regulations. Through their engagement, the women and men of the villages demonstrated their ability to manage the environment effectively, even though in the end these initiatives were not included in the final management plans for the areas (Rajagopalan, 2007, 2008).

Let's analyse this...

The responsibility to ensure the sustainability of fisheries belongs to “all parties” – in this case, States, fishing communities and other resource users. **Para 5.13** and **Para 5.14** of the SSF Guidelines define these responsibilities. Similarly, **Para 5.18** seeks to support the role of all actors, including States and small-scale fishing communities, in responsible co-management. It clearly supports the role of women in taking a lead in participatory resource management. However, certain responsibilities fall primarily upon States. These include extending support to small-scale fishing communities – giving special attention to the equitable participation of women – for them to take responsibility for the management of resources on which their livelihood depends (**Para 5.15**); monitoring fishing activities and preventing illegal and/or destructive fishing practices (**Para 5.16**); and clarifying roles and responsibilities in order to enable local communities to become better managers of their resources (**Para 5.17**). These responsibilities need to be defined in a context that takes into account the legitimate conservation regime that was put in place in India challenged the traditional occupation of the Mannar fishing communities. While the SSF Guidelines call upon small-scale fishing communities to support States in monitoring and surveillance activities designed to prevent illegal/destructive fishing (**Para 5.16**), threatening traditional livelihoods likely fails to elicit community support and build trust. It is the responsibility of the State in these situations to not only monitor and police the environment, but also to adequately engage with communities to secure their traditional livelihoods, or to provide them with meaningful alternatives (**Para 6.8**).

Action points for policy-makers

1. Adopt participatory management processes that involve women, instead of restrictive bans for environmental protection.
2. Seek the participation of women, and their traditional knowledge, to ensure sustainable use of resources.

Action points for CSOs

1. Engage with government authorities to implement participatory management schemes.

In this case study, the local community, led by women, demonstrated its willingness and ability to regulate fishing activities and curb harmful practices. The case study provides critical lessons on how actively engaging with women can foster favourable conditions for gender-inclusive sustainable resource management.

The SSF Guidelines specifically call for the equitable participation of women and other vulnerable groups in managing the resources on which they depend for their well-being, and that are traditionally used for their livelihoods (Para 5.15). The Guidelines recognize that men and women in fishing communities have particular knowledge, perspectives and needs, and in this context call upon States and all parties to ensure that men and women across the fish value chain are inducted into responsible roles for the co-management of their livelihood resources (Para 5.18). Some of these best practices and policy principles are illustrated in [Case study 6](#), which describes the cooperative-run oyster operations of the Mandira Marine Extractive Region in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Case study 6: Mandira Marine Extractive Region, Sao Paulo, Brazil

Mandira is a small reserve covering 600 hectares of estuarine, mainly mangrove, area on the southern coast of Sao Paulo, Brazil. The local community of 25 families of traditional fishers and oyster gatherers is a quilombola – that is, it is made up of descendants of slaves, who can trace their ancestry in the region over generations, and have traditional collective rights over the estuarine area. In December 2002, Mandira was officially declared a Marine Extractive Region (MER).

Before the MER was established, the market chain for oysters was dominated by traders, who encouraged overfishing and paid little attention to hygiene and health standards for sea-fish processing. The Mandira MER became part of a cooperative project, covering five different communities, that was set up in 1997. The cooperative focused on setting high standards for oysters so they could be sold for a better price. The project included improved downstream facilities for oyster storage and transport.

Mandira is a good example of participatory co-management. Rules are made by the local members, and monitoring is done collaboratively by the members and the government's Instituto Brasileiro do Meio Ambiente e dos Recursos Naturais Renováveis (IBAMA – “Brazilian Institute for the Environment”). Many locally conceived methods for oyster rearing have the potential to be improved and adapted with outside technical support. Several special initiatives have been introduced to specifically benefit women, including training courses and workshops on making handicrafts, sewing, rice cultivation and ecotourism (Diegues, 2008).

Let's analyse this...

This case study highlights the importance of involving all stakeholders to ensure that fisheries are responsible and sustainable (Para 5.13, Para 5.14). It exemplifies the role and duties of States in introducing and promoting participatory management (Para 5.17). In particular, the effort to include oyster marketing as part of the overall MER programme, as well as the special programmes for women, show the importance of integration along the value chain for ensuring sustainability, and the responsibility of States and development partners in this regard (Para 5.18, and also Para 7.4 in the chapter on Value chains, post-harvest and trade).

Action points for policy-makers

1. Promote collaboration between professional organizations and fisheries communities to improve efficiency, and develop sustainable fisheries practices, across value chains.
2. Ensure participation of women at all stages of development programmes.

Action points for CSOs

1. Form local organizations to ensure fair representation and participation of women in development programmes.

The Gulf of Mannar and Mandira MER case studies are examples of participatory and sustainable community fisheries management efforts, the former implemented voluntarily by local communities, and the latter with support from the State.

There is a growing body of research documenting the successful participation of women, despite restrictions of time and cultural expectations, in community-based resource management programmes in the small-scale fisheries sector (Quist and Polotan-De la Cruz, 2008; CBNRM Learning Institute, 2009; Berkes, 2003; Peters, Lefur and Mulekom, 2008). However, community-led management programmes can also lead to situations of overfishing and asset concentration (Jul-Larsen *et al.*, 2003). Co-management arrangements, where government formally partners with communities and regulates the participatory process, can help to counteract this and to ensure full participation of women. As stressed in the SSF Guidelines, States must ensure, for instance, that patriarchal traditional norms do not exclude women from equal participation in co-management projects (see **Para 5.18**).

Illegal fishing and transboundary issues

Illegal fishing is often identified as a key reason for the lack of fisheries sustainability, especially in regional contexts. Management efforts aimed at ensuring sustainability have tried to introduce special measures to curb illegal fishing. It is worth noting however that illegality can also be the result of regulatory efforts that do not sufficiently take into account informal traditional fisheries systems, and that exclude the interests of small-scale fishers. When modern forms of governance and fisheries management ignore customary practices, fishers are often forced to engage in illegal practices for their survival. Recognizing this, the SSF Guidelines call upon States to “involve small-scale fishing communities – with special attention to equitable participation of women, vulnerable and marginalized groups – in the design, planning and, as appropriate, implementation of management measures, including protected areas, affecting their livelihood options” (**Para 5.15**). As [Case study 5](#) on the Gulf of Mannar in the previous section illustrated, communities, including their women members, have strong vested interests in protecting their own ecosystems.

Small-scale fishers can also get involved in cross-border illegal fishing, with significant impacts on the women in the community of origin. There are normal processes of apprehension and prosecution when illegal fishing is detected within agreed borders, such as imprisonment, trial and fines. In disputed areas on the other hand, such arrests may lead to more erratic or militaristic reactions (Williams, 2015). While being arrested is a traumatic experience for the fisher who is caught, a less-discussed consequence of cross-border arrests is the impact on women and families, as described in [Case study 7](#).

Case study 7: Transboundary issues and fishers – learning from India and Sri Lanka

Fishermen from India and Sri Lanka face the danger of arrest for straying across territorial waters between the two countries. For instance, on 4 December 2003, 77 Indian fishermen were arrested by the Sri Lankan Navy; a few days later, on 8 December, another 11 fishermen were arrested. Similarly, Sri Lankan fishermen have been arrested in several separate incidents by Indian coast guards and the Indian Navy.

Boat owners were informed of the arrests, but often the families of the arrested crew members received no information for a long time. In most cases, boat owners extended no support to the families, and public support was usually insufficient. Women were most affected in these situations, having to maintain the family while following up with (and facing harassment from) state officials and boat owners. The following story illustrates these issues:

K. Anthony Joseph Ironius Fernando, a share labourer belonging to Munnakkara, Negombo in western Sri Lanka, left the shore on 30 January 2000 as part of the crew of a multi-day boat belonging to a mudalali (investor), also from Negombo. Less than two weeks later, on 12 February, the men were arrested and the boat was seized at the Indian border.

This was the start of a long nightmare for W.M. Lourdes Mourine Fernando, the wife of Ironius Fernando. She was then 37, a mother of three. As months went by without news of Ironius, the condition of the family began to decline. Even with an average income during normal times, Mourine would find it hard to feed her children and send them to school. With Ironius in jail, survival became almost impossible. Mourine's mother and mother-in-law together gave some money, which saw the family through one month. The boat owner contributed Rs1 000 (US\$14 in 2000), which lasted another two months. Mourine took up a job ironing clothes, but this brought her only meagre income. Over time, she got in touch with other women in similar situations. Soon Mourine was taking the lead, organizing prayer services and joining demonstrations in front of the ministry for the release of fishers like Ironius. Their demands focused on the release of all fishers in foreign jails and the preparation of an agreement for the reasonable and fair use of Indian Ocean resource^{7,8}.

Let's analyse this...

This case brings out the complex interconnectivity of issues within the small-scale fisheries sector. Transboundary disputes between nations often affect fishing rights, particularly where coastal resources were freely used by different communities in the past. The burden of such national disputes ultimately falls upon the families of fishers, particularly women. The situations need to be dealt with at two levels.

⁷ Based on Gupta (2007) and Kumara (2000).

⁸ After his release, Ironius gave up fishing in multi-day boats and switched to lagoon fishing, which was less risk-prone. A year later, Mourine started a women's group which evolved into the Sri Vimukthi Fisher Women Organisation, a member organisation of the Sri Lankan National Fisheries Solidarity Movement (NAFSO). However, she later left the organisation and migrated to Pakistan. Ironius supports himself through lagoon fishing, masonry and carpentry work (H. Kumara, personal communication, 2016).

At the more fundamental level, transboundary issues need to be resolved in ways that do not victimize the relatively powerless small-scale fishers. **Para 5.19** of the SSF Guidelines is clear in seeking to grant protection for the tenure rights of traditional fishers in such situations. It is useful to consider this provision together with **Para 6.11**, which urges States to recognize and address the underlying causes and consequences of transboundary movement of fishers, and to contribute to the understanding of transboundary issues affecting the sustainability of small-scale fisheries. At the same time, in the event of fishers in small-scale fishing communities being affected by transboundary disputes or other conflicts, there should be a system of social security that supports their families. The SSF Guidelines address this in **Para 6.3**, which urges States to extend social security protection to workers in small-scale fisheries along the entire value chain, and in **Para 6.4**, which calls for facilitating access (particularly for women) to savings, credit and insurance, among other schemes.

Action points for policy-makers

1. Negotiate bilateral and multilateral agreements with neighbouring countries to ensure peaceful and regulated sharing of common sea resources, taking due account of customary uses.
2. Establish clear protocols to support families of fishers lost at sea or arrested in other countries.

Action points for CSOs

1. Create cross-country networks of men and women fishers' organizations in order to share information and support action for safety of migrant fishers or fishers detained in other countries.

Key recommendations: Sustainable resource management

For policy makers

Protection of livelihood and food security

- › Analyse the impact of sustainable resource management projects and measures that restrict access of men and women from small-scale fishing communities, to ensure that customary access rights, livelihood and food security are not compromised.

Participatory methods

- › Involve local community women in sustainable resource management, through every stage of planning and implementation, using appropriate management structures that ensure and privilege women's participation and capacity development.

Community-based management

- › Prioritize forms of sustainable resource management that focus on the community and not on individual rights, and also on limiting transferability rights.

Competition from other users

- › Ensure that sustainable resource management projects and measures do not push small-scale fisheries into competition with other private sector interests, as communities (especially their women members) are likely to lose out from such competition.

Transboundary disputes

- › Establish intergovernmental mediation agencies to minimize difficulties to fishers caught in transboundary disputes.
- › At the local level, introduce appropriate measures including welfare boards which assure livelihood support to spouses and family members of affected fishers.
- › Include the rights of small-scale fishers in bilateral fish trade and cooperation agreements.

Sustainability

- › Introduce, if necessary, and implement fair regulation in collaboration with small-scale fishing communities, including their women members, to prevent overcapacity and overfishing from threatening the livelihoods of women and the economic viability and environmental sustainability of fisheries resources.

Key recommendations

For CSOs

- › Work with women in small-scale fisheries to help them understand the impact of sustainable resource management projects and other external interventions on their livelihoods, and to enable them to prepare demands for safeguarding their rights.
- › Work with women to develop their capacity to actively engage in participatory management of fisheries projects.
- › Work with the State and communities to ensure gender-sensitive use and application of traditional knowledge to sustainably manage fisheries resources.



4. Social development, employment and decent work

The small-scale fisheries sector provides employment to around 54.8 million people (capture plus aquaculture combined), with an estimated three times as many involved in downstream and upstream activities (Bjorndal, Child and Lem, 2014). It is a more efficient employer than industrial fishing in terms of utilization and efficiency of catch, environmental parameters, and employment generation. In addition, all of the fish caught in the small-scale fisheries sector meets human consumption needs (see [Table 4: Comparison of efficiency parameters in capture fisheries](#)). It therefore has a crucial livelihood function, as well as being an engine for economic growth for millions of people. Despite this, the sector often does not get the attention and support it deserves within the development agendas of States in order to fully realize its potential contribution to food security and nutrition as well as poverty eradication.

Doubly marginalized are women in fishing communities who, being involved in domestic work and caregiving roles in addition to fisheries-related work, find few opportunities to access basic services like education or to improve their life and livelihood conditions (Dey de Pryck, 2013). Pre- and post-harvest activities in the small-scale fisheries sector are often even less understood, making women's work in the sector vastly under-recognized and undervalued (Kleiber, Harris and Vincent, 2015; Dey de Pryck, 2013). Through this lack of recognition, women often find themselves outside the ambit of policy and regulatory considerations, with limited or no access to work-related entitlements or social protection. The SSF Guidelines recognize this problem, and significantly **Para 6.5** urges States to “recognize as economic and professional activities the full range of activities along the small-scale fisheries value chain – both pre- and post-harvest.”

Table 4: Comparison of efficiency parameters in capture fisheries

	Small-scale fisheries	Industrial fisheries
How much of the fish caught is eaten by people?	All	Only half
How much of the fish caught is wasted?	Negligible	20%
For every 1 000 MT of fish caught, how much fuel is consumed?	125 to 250 MT	500 to 1 000 MT
For every 1 000 MT of fish caught, how many people are employment?	400	8

Source: UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, 2005-2008.

The SSF Guidelines in fact define the social development needs of fishery-dependent populations not solely in terms of income or consumption, but rather in multidimensional terms: Are basic needs being met? Are the benefits of fisheries resources equitably shared, including by women and other marginalized groups within fishing communities? Are the working populations within the fisheries sector, including women and the most vulnerable, reaping a fair share of their labour? Are children's rights being protected?

The SSF Guidelines stress the importance of the availability of basic services, some of which are summarized in [Box 4](#), as a precondition for sustainable development. States are entrusted the responsibility of providing these services, with preferential treatment given to women and other marginalized groups in order to ensure equitable benefits.

Box 4: Some preconditions for the development of SSF communities

- > Health, including reproductive health
- > Education
- > Literacy
- > Digital inclusion and technical skills
- > Adequate housing
- > Basic, safe and hygienic sanitation
- > Affordable and reliable transport facilities
- > Nutritious food
- > Safe drinking water
- > Reliable and affordable energy
- > Social security along entire value chain
- > Access to services like credit, savings and insurance
- > Access to crèche and child care services
- > Freedom from State-, social- and gender-based violence

Recognition of women's work in small-scale fisheries

Much of the work done by women in pre-harvest and post-harvest fisheries is undercounted and underpaid (Weeratunge and Snyder, 2009; Williams, Williams and Choo, 2002). In most instances, this work is also not formally recognized by State agencies, and thus is overlooked in data collection. In the absence of enumeration, women's work fails to receive recognition in economic terms, thus excluding women from social security and other benefits targeting the sector. For a full discussion on the roles, work and contributions of women in the small-scale fisheries sector, see the chapter on Women in small-scale fisheries. To reiterate, their work encompasses domestic work, including taking care of children, the sick and the elderly; pre-harvest work, such as collecting and preparing bait, mending nets, and repairing boats; harvest work, including gleaning for molluscs and fish,

harvesting weeds and other edibles, and going out to fish in boats; post-harvest fish processing, including salting, drying, pickling, fermenting and smoking fish; and trade in fish.

The efforts of women in small-scale fisheries in developed countries to have their work recognized could serve as a model for women in fishing communities in developing countries. The campaign for formal recognition of the “collaborative spouse”, presented in [Case study 8](#), is an example of this.

Case study 8: Promoting the “collaborative spouse” status in France

In the mid-1990s the fisheries sector entered a crisis, as industrial fisheries grew in countries of the global North and fish stocks dwindled. Women in France played a big role in defending the rights of the small-scale fisheries sector in this period. Since 1986, a European Union Directive (86/613) had been in force, requiring equal treatment for men and women in self-employed activities, including spouses. No Member State, however, had integrated this Directive into its national law. In Brittany, women working in small-scale fisheries formed a women’s group to better share information and improve their capacity to represent their interests. Their first initiative was to obtain the legal status of “fisher’s wife” in order to ensure professional rights to small-scale fisheries and secure social security benefits. After several years of campaigning, on 18 November 1997 the Fisheries’ Orientation Law was passed, which granted wives of fishers the status of “collaborative spouse”, with retirement benefits and rights to represent their husbands in economic councils. Following this, eight regional women’s organizations formed the Fédération Interrégionale des femmes du Littoral (FIFEL – “Interregional Federation of Coastal Women”) in May 1998 to further promote the role of women fishers as agents of economic development, and to promote a global vision of social, economic and environmental development for the small-scale fisheries sector (Roux, 1999; Frangoudes and O’Doherty, 2004).

Let’s analyse this...

By obtaining legal status for the work they did, the women of Brittany operationalized the spirit of **Para 6.5** of the SSF Guidelines, which urges States to recognize as economically productive work all forms of activities in the small-scale fisheries value chain, including pre-harvest, harvest and post-harvest. The social security benefits granted to the newly formalized role of collaborative spouse were in line with **Para 6.3**, which calls upon States to promote social security protection for workers in small-scale fisheries.

Action points for policy-makers

1. Recognize the rights of all women active in and depending on the small-scale fisheries value chain, including spouses, and valorize their work at all stages – pre-harvest, harvest and post-harvest – in the fisheries value chain.

Action points for CSOs

1. Demand recognition as fishers for the work done by women at all stages – pre-harvest, harvest and post-harvest – in the fisheries value chain.
2. Demand social security protection rights on par with men working in the sector.

The collaborative spouse campaign could be viewed as an early attempt in gender mainstreaming in the small-scale fisheries sector. This case study has relevance to the fisheries sector in most developing countries where women are able to access social security and other benefits only as dependents of male fishers and fishworkers in the family (see, for instance, the case of women fishers in Tamil Nadu, India, in [Case study 22](#)).

Promoting decent work opportunities for women within the SSF sector

Overexploitation of fishery resources in small-scale fishing communities has an impact on livelihood options, and is a major reason for outmigration. Women who stay behind are forced to compete for resources from declining fish stocks, as already demonstrated in the case studies on the Lake Victoria fisheries ([Case study 1](#)) and the Gulf of Mannar ([Case study 5](#)).

Women who cannot compete in such circumstances are forced to seek alternative employment, including migrating out of the community in search of paid work. Migration under conditions of duress, and the consequent disruption of a settled way of life, is not a desirable outcome. A preferred option for decent work would in most cases be work within the local fisheries, which assures women a decent livelihood.

Although States are duty-bound to ensure decent work opportunities, there are cases where intervention by States may not be sufficient to address the magnitude of the crisis in the fisheries. In such situations, the intervention of civil society organizations in organizing participatory, diversified economic activities can lead to beneficial employment alternatives for women within the sector. The organization of alternative employment opportunities in Katosi village in Uganda ([Case study 9](#)) provides a good example of this.

Case study 9: Diversifying livelihoods for small-scale fishing communities in Uganda

Katosi is a fishing village in Uganda, north of Lake Victoria. The Lake Victoria basin is a rich but fragile ecosystem, susceptible to overexploitation. The advent of fish exporting has resulted in declining fish stocks, and export-induced price hikes have made fish unavailable to local fisherwomen for processing and trade. Many women resort to using undersized nets to catch juvenile fish. This not only adds to the problem of declining fish stock, but is also an illegal activity for which the women can be fined or arrested.

The Katosi Women's Development Trust (KWDT) was started in 1996 to organize women to challenge the male domination of fishing. Over the years, KWDT adopted a multi-pronged approach that included livelihood diversification to reduce dependence on fishing; conservation of Lake Victoria's fishing resources; and women's empowerment. Members of KWDT took up activities such as dredging to remove water hyacinth from the lake; providing access to water and sanitation in Katosi; training women to participate in community leadership; and forming Women Advocacy Clubs to lobby for improved livelihood services. Today, as land near Lake Victoria is attracting real estate development, the focus of KWDT includes challenging these development projects. KWDT has also sought to work with the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fishworkers on important policy issues for the sector (Nakato and Namugga, 2013).

Let's analyse this...

Para 6.8 of the SSF Guidelines urges States and other stakeholders to support the development of alternative income-generating opportunities, besides earnings from fisheries, in support of sustainable resource utilization and livelihood diversification. The activities of KWDT are in line with this recommendation.

Action points for policy-makers

1. Recognize the importance of livelihood support in preventing illegal fishing and environmental destruction.
2. Support CSO activities that promote sustainable livelihoods in the small-scale fisheries sector.

Action points for CSOs

1. Form cooperative organizations of women to promote participatory fisheries development and improve the value addition and sustainability of fisheries activities.

A civil society intervention in Katosi helped the local community overcome its livelihood loss, and reversed the dependency on illegal livelihood options. In cases where external help from civil society groups or the State is not forthcoming, the criminalization of fishing communities and the unregulated exploitation of the natural resource base are inevitable outcomes. The SSF Guidelines urge States to take steps to prevent and eliminate destructive fishing (Para 5.16). However, this case study suggests that long-term prevention is possible only when livelihood is protected, for example by regulating fish exports or by establishing viable alternative livelihood options. This therefore underscores the need for policy coherence in regulation designed to secure livelihoods as well as the natural resource base. For gender-equitable fisheries to be in line with the SSF Guidelines, common policy initiatives have to be based on identifying, on a case-by-case basis, the specific issues and needs of women, and granting and protecting the right to preferential access or providing alternative livelihood opportunities. The tenure-related provisions of the SSF Guidelines provide clear guidance in support of gender equity in such measures.

Employment in industrial fish processing

The growth of industrial fish processing is a direct result of the commercialization and globalization of fish trade. Women displaced from traditional post-harvest occupations find new employment in fish processing factories. They account for around 62 percent of the factory workforce, ranging from 66 percent in marine to 28 percent in inland fisheries (Dey de Pryck, 2013). Women's work in the fish processing industry is typically confined to informally contracted, low-technology, low-skill jobs, with men occupying the supervisory and skilled positions. Women are also paid less than men, and are unlikely to enjoy social benefits or access to child care facilities and other services. Yet wage work is highly sought in the context of dwindling livelihood options, and gives women a measure of economic independence (Dey de Pryck, 2013). In such situations, there exists a vast power differential between employers and women in need of work, which allows for the violation of labour laws in the employment of women. As the following [Case study 10](#) suggests, organization among workers may help reduce violations.

Case study 10: Pacific Fishing Company on Levuka Island, Fiji

The State-owned Pacific Fishing Company (PAFCO) on Levuka Island in Fiji employs around 350 women workers, mainly indigenous women in its processing factory. In 2000, the largest canned seafood company in North America signed on PAFCO as a strategic partner. Wages paid in 2003 were well below the poverty level.

Several arbitration rulings and court judgments took place over eight years, requiring PAFCO and the government to pay better wages and improve working conditions, but these were ignored. Benefits accruing to the company from its involvement in the global tuna trade rarely “flowed down” to workers (Rajan, 2005). Finally in August 2003, workers at PAFCO organized and went on strike, leading to an agreement that increased wages for workers by around 80 percent (ICSF, 2003). Wages and related allowances are now paid as required, according to the manufacturing wages regulation and all other applicable legislation. PACFO provides free transport to all workers who are required to work from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. A day care centre which operates as a kindergarten is run and managed by PACFO. In addition, equal employment opportunities are promoted, and there are now female forklift operators as well as a number of female supervisors. Annual health and medical check-ups are conducted, and follow-up is provided as necessary. The company also assists employees with investment and saving schemes, and independent auditors carry out thorough social audits of the plant (Sullivan and Ram-Bidesi, 2008; M. Sobey, personal communication).

Let's analyse this...

This case study illustrates the responsibility of the State as well as private companies to ensure decent work for workers in the small-scale fisheries sector, including those in formal and informal employment (Para 6.6), and to ensure an adequate standard of living (Para 6.7). In this case, the responsibility is doubly applicable as the State is both the regulator and the employer.

Action points for policy-makers

1. Ensure strict enforcement of all labour legislation in fisheries employment.
2. Ensure that concessions to promote foreign investment in fisheries do not include dilution of labour rights.

Action points for CSOs

1. Promote organizations of women workers to safeguard their rights.
2. Join international alliances of CSOs to secure the rights of women workers employed in global supply chains.

The case study highlights several issues related to workers' rights and the responsibility of States and companies with regard to decent work and employment, for instance wages and occupational health. It also shows the importance of collective action for workers to secure their economic rights.

Women in migrant work

If the prospect of wages in factory-based jobs constitutes a “pull” factor, localized resource depletion and limited livelihood options in villages are “push” factors, spurring the outmigration of women to other regions in search of employment. The migrant workforce, being displaced from its roots and unorganized, is particularly vulnerable to labour and human rights violations (FAO, 2016b).

Women from small-scale fishing communities may also migrate beyond their national boundaries in search of economic opportunities. The migration can be legal, or illegal and undocumented. Even in circumstances where the women migrate legally, as part of government-recognized schemes, they may be denied the legal rights available to local workers. This disparity serves to weaken the economic and social entitlements of the migrant workforce, and at the same time it may adversely affect local labour conditions. The following [Case study 11](#), on Chinese women replacing Japanese workers in oyster shucking, brings out some of these issues.

Case study 11: Migrant Chinese women workers employed in oyster shucking in Japan

Oyster farming and harvesting is an important activity in the town of Oku, Japan. The peeling of oysters, or shucking, is labour-intensive work. As young Japanese women sought better-paid jobs in cities, older women were increasingly doing the oyster shucking in traditional communities. Then, beginning in the early 2000s, oyster farmers started employing young, migrant women workers from China to replace the older Japanese women. The Chinese women came to Japan under programmes of the Japan International Training Cooperation Organization (JITCO).

Under the Fishers’ Cooperative Laws, Japanese women could only be employed from 5 a.m. to 3 p.m. The migrant Chinese women were not bound by these regulations, and could therefore be asked to work longer hours. Unfortunately this resulted in a loss of livelihood for the older Japanese women. Most were not covered by any old age pension scheme (Soejima and Frangoudes, 2014).

Let’s analyse this...

The SSF Guidelines clearly specify the responsibility of the State in the case of transboundary movement of fishers (**Para 6.11**) and of the State and other actors in the case of migrant workers (**Para 6.10**). Organizations in such cases can consider using both provisions to enforce compliance by the State and the employers. The conditions of decent work (**Para 6.6**) and protection from unfair work conditions (**Para 6.12**) should be equally applicable to migrant workers.

The responsibility of the State to provide social security protection could also be invoked to demand pension and security for the older Japanese women displaced from their traditional work of oyster shucking (**Para 6.3**). Women still able to work could demand support in finding alternative employment (**Para 6.8**).

Action points for policy-makers

1. Ensure regulation of cross-country employment, and equal application of labour rights to migrant workers from other countries.
2. Provide social security protection to elderly working women in the sector.
3. Ensure women displaced from traditional occupations are provided with social security protection and helped to find alternative employment.

Action points for CSOs

1. Promote organizations of migrant women and of local women displaced from employment.
2. Ensure migration does not result in falling labour standards or hostility among workers.

While women usually migrate under their own individual capacities, the Chinese women employed in oyster shucking in this case study were inducted under programmes of a State-run agency. In such cases, additional responsibility would accrue to States for the protection of working women's rights.

Occupational health and safety issues

Occupational health problems faced by women workers in fish processing plants are linked to poor working conditions, including exposure to high levels of humidity and low temperatures; physically taxing work involving repetitive movements and standing for long periods throughout the day (Josupeit, 2006); and exploitative terms of work, which may flout statutory labour norms (De Silva and Yamao, 2004) and carry the risk of harassment at the workplace from supervisors and managers who are often men.

A survey of women working in fish processing factories in Chile, where women did seasonal, short-term work, found that most suffered from fatigue and stress; varicose veins; swollen legs and feet; and back, neck and shoulder pain. The women had to stay standing throughout the long workday with very few breaks, working at badly designed workstations. Women also complained of skin allergies from the constant contact with fish and chemicals. The effects were compounded in women who had small children, and had to balance the burden of substantial domestic work (Kane and Dennerstein, 1999).

In Fiji and in Papua New Guinea, the city-based tuna industry is a large employer of women. Most women workers, who typically live in far-flung rural areas, undergo disproportionate stress in balancing out the demands of work (which pays less than a living wage) and domestic work responsibilities, compounded by the difficulties of commuting daily in the absence of safe and reliable transport (Sullivan and Ram-Bidesi, 2008).

Thus, conditions beyond the immediate workplace also have a strong impact on the issue of occupational safety. Women need sufficient support (see [Box 4](#)) to be able to strike a balance between their domestic responsibilities and factory work. Similarly, women often have to travel considerable distances to get to work, and, if working hours are long, night travel may be required as well. Safe transport therefore is integral to the well-being of the woman fishworker.

Issues of occupational health are by no means limited to factory-based work. Women in the traditional small-scale fisheries sector also have to deal with work-related health problems. For instance, women

harvesters who glean shellfish often stand knee-deep for long hours in nearshore and intertidal waters, and thus suffer a host of occupational health-related ailments. One study, which found a significant incidence of musculoskeletal disorders, hypertension and arthritis among artisanal fisherwomen and shellfish gatherers, included among its recommendations the implementation of compensatory public health policies, training of health professionals and technicians, and evaluation of the allocations of federal retirement benefits (dps Santos Müller *et al.*, 2016). In the discussion on capacity development in [Chapter 10](#) of this handbook, [Case study 28](#) describes how in Brazil, the Articulação Nacional das Pescadoras (ANP – “National Articulation of Fisherwomen”) has prioritized campaigning and advocacy on issues related to the occupational diseases of shellfish collectors, working closely with State officials and researchers to improve the quality of treatment services.

Violence against women within communities

Women in small-scale fishing communities have to deal with gender-based violence at various levels – within families, in communities, and in public places. Children often internalize this violence, and might play it out in their own lives. Violence is often more prevalent in situations where communities are under economic and social stress. It is important to analyse the roots of such violence so that long-term, meaningful actions can be implemented, and responsibility can be properly apportioned across parties at all levels. [Case study 12](#) shows how the problem of domestic violence is deeply interconnected to social structures that reinforce gender-based vulnerabilities and keep women at risk.

Case study 12: Growing violence and abuse in small-scale fisheries in South Africa

A workshop in September 2012 organized by the Masifundise Development Trust critiqued the South African Government’s new small-scale fisheries policy of 2012, which, while stating a commitment to the principle of gender equity and addressing past discrimination against women, is largely silent on remedial measures for this past discrimination against women in fisheries. The mechanisms to operationalize the principle of gender equality are still to be developed.

The women at the workshop shared their experiences of discrimination at the level of the household, the community, the market, and in relation to the State.

It emerged that there are high levels of gender violence and discrimination at home (compounded by drug and alcohol abuse); in communities, where there are high levels of rape and sexual assault; in the market, where female labour is regarded as less valuable and much of it remains invisible, and where women (when employed) are often subject to unsafe and exploitative labour conditions; and in relation to the State, which has failed to create the enabling conditions necessary for women to participate fully and equitably in all activities along the value chain.

Women expressed concern that the criteria used to determine membership in the small-scale fisheries sector, and hence eligibility to benefit from the new policy on small-scale fisheries, might exclude them if their unpaid, invisible labour in the sector was not recognized.

High levels of poverty among small-scale fishing communities exacerbate women’s experience of discrimination, in some instances forcing them to resort to illegal and high-risk harvesting in order to feed their children. Their experiences highlight the interdependence between their rights as women and their rights as small-scale fishers⁹.

Let’s analyse this...

⁹ This case has been rewritten by Jackie Sunde for this handbook, based on Sunde (2010).

The SSF Guidelines place responsibility on all parties for ensuring an environment free of crime, violence and abuse (Para 6.9). The Guidelines contain certain enabling provisions for the sector that specify priority access for women, such as the provisioning of basic services, social security, and credit and insurance schemes (Para 6.3, Para 6.4) with priority access for women; and pursuing inclusive and non-discriminatory policies that allow women to earn a fair return from their labour (Para 6.7). As a precondition for gender equality, it would be critically important to push for the implementation of such enabling provisions. However, in many instances, the reality is that policy measures by States leave out the needs of women. It would be useful in this context to also look at [Chapter 6](#) of the SSF Guidelines, which specifies provisions for gender equality (Para 8.1, Para 8.3).

Action points for policy-makers

1. Valorize and recognize all women's work along the supply chain.
2. Guarantee inclusion of all women in policies pertaining to the small-scale fisheries sector.
3. Enact legislation and policy measures aimed at ending violence against women in fisheries

Action points for CSOs

1. Form women's community organizations to resist violence within families and communities.
2. Demand comprehensive government measures (e.g. adequate and safe public transport) to reduce violence against women in public spaces.

Child labour in small-scale fisheries

Poverty and the lack of meaningful alternatives often push children within small-scale fishing communities into the labour force, either within the family fishing enterprise or in wage employment. Within family fishing settings, the work that children and youth are engaged in reflects the gender division of labour, with boys assisting men in capture fishing and girls typically assisting women in post-harvest tasks (FAO/ILO, 2011). Children in particular may face many forms of violation and exploitation when forced into vulnerable situations outside their homes and communities. Goal 8 of the SDGs recognizes the importance of addressing this issue, calling on States to promote decent job creation.¹⁰

Child labour refers either to work for which the child is too young – work done below the required minimum age – or work which, because of its detrimental nature or conditions, is altogether considered unsuitable for children and is thus prohibited.¹¹ The minimum age specifications for work, however, differ from country to country, making child labour a particularly pernicious problem to tackle. A major issue is the differentiation between *acceptable work*, *child labour* and the *worst forms of child labour*.¹² Several parameters play a part in this differentiation, and in this context two

¹⁰ See Goal 8 (Decent Work for All) of the SDGs, in particular provisions 8.3, 8.7 and 8.8 (available at <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>).

¹¹ UN General Assembly. 2009. Status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Report of the Secretary-General. UN Doc. A/64/172, paragraph 13. Cited in FAO/ILO (2011).

¹² See FAO/ILO (2011) and FAO (2010).

conventions are particularly significant: the ILO Minimum Age Convention (C138) and the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (C182) (FAO, 2010). C182 defines the worst forms as including slavery; trafficking; debt bondage; serfdom; forced or compulsory labour, including recruitment in armed conflict; prostitution; illicit activities; and work that is likely to harm children's health, safety or morals.¹³

In small-scale fisheries all over the world, there are examples of serious violations of international conventions and national laws on child labour.¹⁴ In Senegal, according to a 2002 study, children below 15 (the legal minimum age for fishing) constituted one-third of the labour force in capture fisheries, boat-building and boat repair services, outboard repairing workshops, fish processing, and the fish trade. In Cambodia, children are employed in night- and daytime deep-sea fishing, and also engaged in loading and unloading fish, peeling fish and shucking crab. Hazards include violent piracy at sea. In Orissa, India, girl children above the age of seven are employed in cleaning, salting and drying fish. Case studies in the ILO Global Report on Child Labour (2006) showed how education especially for girl children along with poverty reduction programmes significantly reduced child labour in the Republic of Korea, Malaysia and Brazil. Studies in Ghana have shown there is a progressive collapse of the family structure in fishing communities, linked to declining fish catch and related poverty. This also leads to child labour exploitation (Mathew, 2010).

In the Gwadar district in Pakistan, subsistence fishing has been replaced by commercial fishing with fishing launches and trawlers. Crews on the vessels include boys as young as 7–9 years. An ILO study found 80 percent of the labour force under the age of 19 years in fisheries in this district started out as child labour. Often, the children are sexually exploited by adults on board, and are thus exposed to genital trauma and sexually transmitted infections (UNODC, 2011).

The SSF Guidelines clearly place the responsibility on States to eradicate bonded or forced labour among children, and to provide access to schools and education facilities (Para 6.13, Para 6.14). But other actors, including the private sector and small-scale fisheries actors themselves, are also responsible for protecting children from abuse and securing their rights according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Para 6.15).

The ILO classifies three types of broad action that can be taken with respect to child labour (FAO/ILO, 2011):

- Prevention, which is the most important approach and includes poverty-focused, participatory and integrated programmes aimed at pro-poor growth;
- Withdrawal, which is needed in the context of close community participation and collaboration in order to rescue and rehabilitate children engaged in the worst forms of child labour;
- Protection, through regulated conditions for the 15–17 age group in certain types of work.

FAO recommends that while child labour in fisheries needs to be prevented and reduced, hazardous child labour occupation can be tackled by including the fisheries sector in national hazardous work lists (FAO, 2016c). However, the issue of child labour and abuse of children is rooted in structural causes, linked to the economic difficulties in the small-scale fisheries sector, and can ultimately be tackled only by a holistic approach.

¹³ The ILO Minimum Age Convention (C138) and the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (C182) are available on the ILO Conventions webpage: <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:12000::NO::>

¹⁴ [All the examples in this paragraph are cited from Mathew \(2010\).](#)

Key recommendations: Social development, employment and decent work

For policy maker

Social development

- Ensure policy support for the provisioning of affordable basic services in traditional fishing localities, including health, education, literacy, digital inclusion, nutrition, safe drinking water, energy, housing and support for house repairs, transport, toilets, and proper sewerage facilities aimed at minimizing the pollution of water bodies.
- Ensure well-designed, well-funded and safe public transport, which women can access at all hours to take them from their communities and locations of residence to their places of work.
- Establish a national system of social security and low-interest credit accessible by members of small-scale fishing communities, with special emphasis on women. These schemes should specifically include:
 - old age pensions for single women, including widows and abandoned women;
 - scholarships for children's education.
- Consider levying a cess on all industrial fishing activities, including fish exporting, to support social development measures in small-scale fisheries. This can be seen as a tax to balance economic, social and environmental objectives related to fisheries. The cess can also be extended to other industrial activities that use marine and inland water resources.

Diversified livelihoods and migration

- Conduct periodic censuses of employment within small-scale fisheries, with specific emphasis on women seeking alternative employment, to inform policy-making on:
 - strengthening livelihood options for women within their communities;
 - providing alternative livelihood options in the neighbourhood.
- Conduct periodic censuses of migration from small-scale fishing communities, including migration of women. Systems should be set up to provide social security to migrant women and help them when they are in distress.
- Support civil society efforts to promote systems of self-management that can give women livelihood options in the vicinity of their homes and communities.
- Ensure women migrants from other countries employed in the small-scale fisheries sector have rights on par with local laws.

Wage employment

- Ensure regulation of employment, and provision of all statutory benefits for women employed in fish processing companies, on par with those available to male workers in other industries.
- Ensure that local laws are aligned with international standards for decent work. In particular, ensure that laws guarantee equal wage for equal work, a living wage, maternity and other leave benefits, and crèche facilities.
- Support the establishment of tripartite bodies for dispute resolution consisting of employers,

state bodies and workers' organizations. In particular, encourage representation of women workers' organizations from the small-scale fisheries sector in these bodies.

Organization and capacity development

- › Ensure that local laws allow for freedom of association and collective bargaining in order to help women fishers and fishworkers overcome vulnerability.

Occupational safety and health

- › Introduce regular health check-ups and treatment, through free public health systems, for women employed in high-risk jobs in small-scale fisheries and fish processing factories.
- › Conduct periodic studies to update lists of high-risk workers and work-related ailments.
- › Enact legislation in support of health care and compensation for women with occupational health issues.

Violence against women

- › Pass strict laws for penal action in cases of violence against women. These should be backed by adequate government machinery, including the employment of women officers. There should be adequate provisions for regulation near fishing communities that are high-risk areas for violence against women.
- › Facilitate the establishment of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms that include traditional systems, ensuring that women's rights are not ignored by traditional practices.
- › Enact laws that safeguard the rights of women threatened by violence in families and communities, including livelihood access and shares in family property.

Rights of children

- › Ensure the implementation of child labour laws in fisheries that are fully aligned with international instruments.
- › Align national statutory policy and legal frameworks with FAO recommendations to include the fisheries sector in national hazardous work lists. Employment of child labour in the sector should therefore follow norms for hazardous work.
- › Provide decent hostel facilities with schooling for children rescued from abusive work and trafficking in fisheries, and establish systems to help reunite children with their families and communities.

Key recommendations

For CSOs

- › In collaboration with women in fishing communities, carry out comprehensive social surveys to establish and document the conditions of women and children using social and economic development parameters.
- › Consider developing and providing schemes for alternative and context-relevant social security and credit for women and disadvantaged groups within the small-scale fisheries sector, following existing successful models.
- › Identify successful models from other regions for social security protection and enhanced participation of women in decision-making processes.
- › Promote the formation of systems that strengthen livelihood options for women near their homes, including autonomously managed organizations and marketing networks.
- › Encourage representation of women fishers and fishworkers in fisheries organizations, including in leadership positions.
- › Ensure full representation of women along the entire value chain in official negotiations.
- › Promote networking among organizations of women in small-scale fisheries and in industrial fish processing to pursue common goals in relation to social entitlements.
- › Facilitate the organization of migrant women workers and their networking with local worker organizations and women's groups.
- › Organize with professionals to conduct epidemiological, accident-risk and health studies for women in small-scale fishing communities.
- › Ensure that organizations of fishers and fishworkers include violence against women as a high priority in issues taken up internally, and in discussions with States.
- › Facilitate a process of networking between fishworker organizations and women's organizations that take up issues of gender violence.
- › In collaboration with States and women's organizations, provide shelters and legal and psychological support for women and their children facing domestic violence in small-scale fisheries .
- › Include violence against children as a principal focus of action. Act as watchdogs to ensure government action to prevent child labour, punish offenders, and provide legal and psychological support facilities for children who have been victims of abuse.



5. Value chains, post-harvest and trade

The term “value chain” refers to the stages through which a product passes and gains value. Value chains can be analysed to identify appropriate points of intervention in order to help improve efficiencies, and to evaluate what needs to be done to improve the situation of those groups currently disadvantaged in the value chain (Mayoux and Mackie, 2007). See [Chapter 9: Information, research and communication](#) for a detailed discussion on value chain analysis. Women’s involvement in productive activities enhances household well-being, since their income is usually spent on food and children’s education (FAO, 2006b). Women thus act as both income providers and caregivers – at times the only ones in their households. The burden of poverty falls disproportionately on these female-headed households (Islam, 2011).

Women’s roles in fish value chains

Women’s average participation rate in small-scale fisheries activities is estimated to be nearly 50 percent (Weeratunge and Snyder, 2009). Depending on region and type of fishery, women may be active in fishing, the gleaning or gathering of marine and aquatic species, fish processing, and marketing and trade. Although their involvement in capture is limited to a few species and regions, women dominate many fisheries activities, such as the gathering and gleaning of shellfish and invertebrates; fish processing, where between 85 to 90 percent of workers are estimated to be women (Montfort, 2015); and fish vending and trade. For instance, in the Congo, between 80 and 90 percent of fish traders are women (FAO, 2006a), and in the Mekong river basin in Southeast Asia, nearly five thousand fish markets in the area are run by women (UNEP, 2010). In countries like Benin, Cambodia, the Congo, Mali and Thailand, women fish or collect fish on lakes using their own boats; while in Uganda, it is taboo for women to be on board a fishing vessel (World Bank, 2012). In Africa, women known as “fish mammies” dominate fish trade in many countries, where they also have a powerful role in providing informal credit. For example, 90 percent of small-scale fisheries production in Ghana is handled by fish mammies (FAO, 2006b). Many factors determine the status and power of women in small-scale fisheries, such as prevailing cultural norms and attitudes, the extent of commercialization of the product, or the types of technology used. Within a single country, different groups of women may occupy different positions of power within the same fish value chain, depending on how wealthy they are or on their religion and ethnicity.

At the same time, however, in fisheries across regions, there are remarkable similarities based on gender. In general, women are concentrated in the lower levels of fish value chains (De Silva, 2011). Their unpaid labour sustains fishing households. As discussed in Part 1, many essential pre-harvest tasks are usually performed within the home, and tend to acquire the characteristics of housework; they are carried out mainly by women as part of their unpaid responsibilities. While in some cases, like the case of the African fish mammies, women may play relatively dominant roles in fish value chains, most women have limited access to resources, and their labour (if paid) fetches low financial returns.

Women also tend to have low levels of organization and are usually marginalized from fisheries decision-making roles, be they in management or in fisheries unions and associations. Their access to resources vital for economic enhancement, such as capital, loans, credit and related services, is

limited. Few training opportunities are available to women for organizational development, or to acquire or improve their professional skills.

The failure to recognize the multiple roles performed by women along fish value chains, as well as the unpaid and underpaid nature of their work, often prevents them from fully realizing their entrepreneurial potential.

Existing support and barriers for women in traditional small-scale fisheries

Traditional practices often support women in certain roles that they occupy in fisheries. In the fishing villages of Navagaon in Maharashtra in India, for instance, all fish processing activities take place on community land, whose unofficial ownership and management lies with the traditional village-level governance body, or panchayat. This land is divided among fishing families, and passed down to the daughters-in-law of the house. These drying areas may be rented out to others for drying fish, but they cannot be sold, as the community owns the land. Women invest in the maintenance of these fishing grounds and contribute their own labour. Customary rights over this land are fiercely maintained by the fishing community (Peke, 2016a). Thus, customary practices help to retain control over assets necessary for fish processing, and prevent them from being diverted to other purposes. This example shows how women's customary rights over common lands allow them to retain exclusive use for fish processing.

Another example of the traditional support available to women is that of the jakambi tradition of Lake Victoria in Kenya (see [Case study 15](#)), where the relationship of the fish trader to the captain of a fishing boat allows the fish trader, usually a woman, preferential access to fish in exchange for soft credit. The SSF Guidelines recognize the importance of supporting such traditional practices, while also calling on States and development partners (**Para 7.4**) to support traditional associations of fishers and fishworkers.

Tradition can however also be a hindrance. All over the world, poor men and women from fishing communities rely on common property resources, including inland water bodies, for fishing and food gathering. Women, however, are generally excluded from the management of these resources (Dey de Pryck, 2013). Their access and freedom to engage in fishing are subject to sanctions from male leadership in the communities. A study of the seafood industry lists some of these traditional barriers: women may be barred from certain jobs, such as going to sea on board fishing vessels; be denied ownership rights and independent access to finance and entrepreneurship; and tasked with domestic responsibilities as if these were their natural duties, which could mean up to four hours of extra work per day for women compared with men (Montfort, 2015). Together with other structural constraints, these traditional barriers serve to confine the majority of women to lowly positions within fisheries.

Finally, women are also constrained by tradition from expanding their role in the fisheries sector. Studies along the value chain show in many instances that women's business activities are restricted to low-value markets, and that they have weaker negotiation power than men's businesses. Women entrepreneurs often end up giving priority to family well-being over success in business. In many instances, when their businesses become successful, men take them over (Kusakabe and Sereyvah, 2014).

The SSF Guidelines call upon all parties to challenge traditional practices that are discriminatory to women (**Para 8.1**) and, in situations where legal and constitutional reforms strengthen women's rights, to make the necessary changes to align customary tenure norms with such reforms (**Para 5.4**).

Types of support needed by women in traditional small-scale fisheries

Most countries fail to recognize women's pre-harvest and harvest activities as economic work. For instance, in Indonesia, the task of catching sea worms during low tide in mangrove areas for use in handline fishing can take up to one hour a day (Fitriana and Stacey, 2012). Repairing cast nets; repairing dugouts, canoes and other vessels; maintaining accounts; and preparing food for fishing trips are other examples of women's time-consuming, pre-production activities that are not recognized as work. Without such pre-harvest work, the work of fishing would be impossible to carry out, so it is important for decision-makers and planners to recognize and bring this work into the ambit of policy-making. This would contribute to increasing the overall efficiency of the small-scale fisheries sector, while at the same time giving due recognition to the goal of gender-equitable social development, in keeping with the international human rights obligations of States.

Women's harvesting activities are similarly overlooked. Fish and other aquatic species such as invertebrates that women catch are vital income sources, and sometimes the sole food item on the table. Yet only rarely are these accounted for as fishing activities. Indeed, the implications of terming women's gleaning of invertebrates as "collection" or "gathering" rather than "fishing" go beyond the mere choice of words. Such nomenclature leads to substantially underestimating the fishing pressure in coastal areas and undervaluing the economic and social contributions of women (Harper *et al.*, 2013) – and consequently the failure to develop relevant and effective policy for the sector.

What little attention the women in small-scale fisheries do receive is usually reserved for the post-harvest sector, although here too gender inequalities are rarely adequately addressed. Women in post-harvest processing and trade face a range of specific challenges. Some of the major issues include:

- > managing post-harvest losses
- > improving credit access
- > improving access to markets

These problems may vary substantially from region to region, but affect most women employed in small-scale post-harvest fisheries. The issues are discussed below.

Managing post-harvest losses

Fish is a perishable product, highly susceptible to post-harvest loss of three main types (Diei-Ouadi and Mgawe, 2011):

- > Physical loss: fish that, after capture or landing, is not used for a number of reasons (e.g. insect infestation).
- > Quality loss: fish that has suffered a deterioration in quality, and is sold for lower than optimum price. Quality loss may occur for many reasons, including lack of proper refrigeration and storage facilities.
- > Market force loss: loss caused by unexpected market demand and supply conditions, forcing operators to sell their product at a price below expectations (e.g. loss due to poor or incorrect market information).

Box 5: Methods for post-harvest loss assessment

FAO has developed methods that help to assess post-harvest fish loss. Three of these methods, extensively field-tested for validity and reliability, are:

Informal Fish Loss Assessment Method (IFLAM), an informal method based on participatory rural appraisal (PRA) principles. It is used to generate qualitative and indicative quantitative loss data that can be used to inform decision-making or to plan the use of the other methods.

Load Tracking (LT), a quantitative assessment method used to quantify losses at stages along the distribution chain or losses related to specific activities such as fishing, transport, processing and marketing.

Questionnaire Loss Assessment Method (QLAM), another quantitative method that relies on interviewing a population sample in a community or geographical area using a questionnaire to validate data generated by the IFLAM and LT.

Source: Diei-Ouadi and Mgawe, 2011.

A study conducted by FAO in five sub-Saharan countries found quality losses to account for more than 70 percent of total losses, while physical losses seldom exceeded 5 percent. The financial impact of such losses was found to be significant. In Ghana, for example, US\$60 million and US\$9.4 million are annually lost in the smoked fish processing and Watsa (purse seine) fishery, respectively (Akande and Diei-Ouadi, 2010).

Today, several methods are available to help traditional fishers and fishworkers, in particular women, to assess post-harvest losses. These methods help identify priority losses and areas requiring focused intervention, and also spread awareness and recognition among all stakeholders of loss assessment, capacity building and networking (see [Box 5](#)).

Para 7.5 of the SSF Guidelines specifically calls on all parties to avoid post-harvest losses and seek ways to create value addition through local innovations and culturally appropriate technology transfers. However, the post-harvest sector in small-scale fisheries is often characterized by low levels of investment in research and modernization, and consequent inefficiencies in processing and trade as well as low profits.

Given the large number of women employed in post-harvest, such investment would:

- increase incomes and boost the economic status of small-scale fisher households; and
- ensure the availability of better quality and more easily accessible fish for local consumption, thus strengthening food security (Diei-Ouadi and Mgawe, 2011).

There are several examples of innovations in the post-harvest sector that have benefitted women (see [Box 6](#)). These examples underscore the need to support post-harvest activities in order to increase efficiency, reduce drudgery, and improve incomes in the context of increasing competition and livelihood loss in the sector.

In addition, in order to ensure their needs are appropriately addressed, women must be empowered

to intervene in decision-making on priority areas for research, policy and budgetary allocation. The provisions in [Chapter 10](#) of the SSF Guidelines related to capacity development are particularly relevant here.

Box 6: Examples of increasing post-harvest efficiency and market access

FAO-Thiaroye processing technique

In 2013 FAO helped members of the Cooperative for Fishery Product Traders and Processors (CMATPHA) in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire to design, construct and use the FAO-Thiaroye processing technique, an improvement over the well-known Chorkor oven used in fish processing. The new technology helped members of the CMATPHA to reduce production losses, which were previously as high as 40 percent. It also helped improve fish quality, increase value added, and improve working conditions for women by reducing their exposure to heat and smoke. The technology is now being used in fish processing units in Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, the United Republic of Tanzania, and Togo.*

Accessing markets using mobile phones

Omena is a small fish that is the mainstay of the local economy of certain villages around Lake Victoria in Kenya. However, women must dry and sell the fish within six hours, after which it loses its value. Brokers who buy the fish collude to keep prices low. The Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute has set up a fish market information network that women can access through their mobile phones. The data has helped women bargain better, and improved incomes by around 20 percent.**

Sources: *Y. Diei-Ouadi, personal communication, 2017; **Dey de Pryck, 2013.

Improving credit access

The jakambi relationship, discussed further below in [Case study 15](#), highlights the presence of traditional credit arrangements in small-scale fishing communities. The fact that new entrants in the fish trade also adopt these credit arrangements underscores the need for credit, and also the fact that women will easily adopt reliable and workable practices when these are made accessible.

The economic and geographical marginalization of women fishers and fishworkers results in their limited access to institutional or formal sources of credit and savings, such as banks, cooperative societies and so on. Further, women's social marginalization and gender bias are responsible for their illiteracy, poor education, lack of control over finances, lack of assets that they can use as collateral for credit, and unfamiliarity/discomfort with formal systems of savings.

Many poor women in the fisheries sector turn to informal credit from local moneylenders at often exploitative rates of interest (Tietze and Villareal, 2003). Examples from different parts of the world confirm women's need for credit. In India, Bangladesh and other parts of the Indian subcontinent, microcredit in the form of Self-Help Groups (SHGs), which are small groups of women who voluntarily come together for mutual benefit and support, is a popular source of credit. At the same time, it must

be noted that in many countries in West Africa, such as Senegal, women processors and traders act as creditors, financing fishing trips or extending other forms of credit, as it earns them primary or exclusive rights to buy the catch and also guarantees a continuous supply of fish (Lenselink, 2002).

Microfinance can be an effective tool for empowering women in fishing communities. Programmes using microfinance strategies can help households to increase incomes; facilitate consumption; develop small enterprises; and reduce economic and social vulnerability. However, the diverse nature of microfinance organizations and activities makes it difficult to give blanket endorsement to any particular microfinance mechanism as a positive development strategy (Tietze and Villareal, 2003).

There are several examples of successful microfinance programmes in different countries. In Bangladesh, the quasi-governmental Pali Karma Sahayak Foundation has worked successfully through NGOs as an apex wholesaler of microfinance funds for women in the fisheries sector. The Bangladesh experience was that microfinance programmes were successful when the poor had continuous access to credit for at least eight to ten years in order to generate enough savings to escape the debt and poverty trap. In the Philippines, the government-administered Land Bank of Philippines operated a revolving fund scheme through women's groups, disbursing credit for working capital and trade advances to poor women fish traders (Tietze and Villareal, 2003). And in India, the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) Bank is an example in the non-government sector of how women can harness their savings on a larger scale for mutual aid (Peke, 2013).

Improving market access

More than half the fish (56 percent) sold in developing countries in 2010 was in the form of fresh fish (FAO, 2012a). Fish, as a perishable commodity, requires easy and reliable access to markets. Good market facilities with ice, refrigeration and storage facilities, and the availability of basic services and infrastructure such as transport, electricity and roads, greatly reduce post-harvest loss and wastage. Women in particular are severely constrained by inadequate fish transport options and lack of safe places in which to sell fish.

In recent years the demand for fresh, chilled and frozen fish has grown, facilitated by the greater availability of ice and cold storage facilities in developing countries. This trend, together with the declining availability of cheap sources of wood for smoking and salt for drying, has affected the market for traditionally preserved and processed fish. Further, increased use of ice and improvements in transport links help external buyers more easily access fresh fish from remote landing sites, increasing the competition with traditional fish traders who lose out if the external buyers have greater buying power (Béné, Macfadyen and Allison, 2007). These developments are likely to increase the vulnerability of the majority of women fish processors, retailers and traders, who will therefore require special support in order to remain in business and sustain their livelihoods.

The responsibility of States and development partners to provide infrastructure and develop organizational capability is laid out in **Para 7.3** and **Para 7.4** of the SSF Guidelines. While States have a special role to play in creating an enabling environment in support of the post-harvest sector, fisheries organizations can also serve to develop sustainable structures. [Case study 13](#) illustrates how a fish market in India was reclaimed through women's organized action.

Case study 13: Reclaiming the Marol fish market in Mumbai, India

Marol is a 150-year old weekly market in Mumbai where dry fish is sold. The fish vendors are women, while traders are usually men.

In the 1960s, the local municipal body built a market which had simple rectangular blocks of cement for vendors to ply their trade from. In 1991, this structure was demolished. There was no redevelopment for 11 years, and women vendors were forced to sell fish in the open, amid rubble and garbage.

Women vendors organized themselves in mahila mandals (women's groups) in protest, and in 2005 they formed the Marol Bazar Koli Mahila Mase Vikreta Sanstha (MBKMMVS). Under continued pressure from this women vendor's organization, the municipal corporation redeveloped the market. Since then, the MBKMMVS has been taking matters into its own hands to improve marketplace facilities.

In Marol, both a retail and a wholesale market operate, but at different times. The retail market runs on Friday from afternoon until late night, and on Saturday from morning until night. The MBKMMVS contributes to the smooth functioning of the market by appointing two men as security guards to mind the unsold fish stock of its members. In 2013, the women retailers paid Rs20 (US\$0.29) as a sitting fee to the MBKMMVS.

The wholesale market runs on Wednesdays and Fridays, attracting traders and vendors from far-off regions. Wholesale sellers and processors also pay a fee to the MBKMMVS, the rate being fixed per basket of fish. In 2013, it was from Rs20 (US\$0.29) to Rs30 (US\$0.44) per basket. Trucks and traders coming from Gujarat and elsewhere had to pay Rs300 (US\$4.43) to Rs500 (US\$5.91) per truck load.

In the past, the market was a hangout for drunkards. This changed when the MBKMMVS had lights installed and security facilities put in place. It also provided an office space for women to refresh themselves. The organization had women's restrooms built and hired two women to maintain them; separate restrooms for men were also provided. Other improvements made by the MBKMMVS included installing lights in the vicinity of the market, and ensuring that the water tank was cleaned twice a year and properly maintained (Peke, 2013).

Let's analyse this...

The SSF Guidelines enjoins States to fulfil duties with respect to several key aspects of post-harvest operations: **Para 7.1** (recognize the central role of the post-harvest subsector); **Para 7.2** (support and facilitate women's participation in post-harvest work); **Para 7.3** (foster, provide and enable investments in support of the post-harvest subsector); and **Para 7.6** (facilitate access to local markets and promote equitable trade for small-scale fishery products). States are also called upon to protect the tenure rights of small-scale fishers, with particular attention paid to women's access rights: **Para 5.6** (determine and safeguard the use and tenure rights of small-scale fishing communities with respect to State-owned resources); **Para 5.9** (protect small-scale fishing communities against arbitrary eviction and the extinguishment and infringement of their tenure rights); and **Para 5.10** (hold effective and meaningful consultation with communities before implementing projects that impact on their tenure rights). **Para 5.15** asks States to include small-scale fishing communities in the management of resources on which their well-being and livelihood depend.

The fact that women were forced to trade fish amid ruin, garbage and the presence of drunkards and other antisocial elements for 11 years represents a violation of key requirements related to decent work, including **Para 6.7** (adequate standard of work) and **Para 6.9** (crime-free environment).

In contrast, the women fish vendors, through their collective action ranging from organizing themselves to improving working conditions and infrastructure, helped to implement key recommendations of the SSF Guidelines pertaining to gender equality: **Para 8.1** (adopting gender mainstreaming as an integral development strategy in the small-scale fisheries sector); and **Para 8.2** (women's participation in fisheries organizations). The case also demonstrates how development partners can support appropriate marketing mechanisms (**Para 7.4**).

Action points for policy-makers

1. Support the provision of clean, regulated market spaces for women fishers.
2. Involve women fishers and their organizations in the planning stages for any post-harvest development projects in the fisheries sector.

Action points for CSOs

1. Form women's organizations to exert influence and control over development processes.
2. Form self-managed organizations to cooperatively manage facilities for women in post-harvest fisheries.

The impact of modernization on women's roles in small-scale fisheries

Modernization in fishing has had significant impacts on the small-scale fisheries sector. In the pre-harvest sector, women's roles in bait preparation, net making and mending, and boat repair have all been drastically affected in many fishing regions, where fishing practices have changed with modernization. For instance, the use of plastic nets has replaced a substantial portion of traditional net weaving and net repair activities.

Impact on women's access to fish

The progressive adoption of industrial fishing techniques in the small-scale fisheries sector in many parts of the world has meant that fish landing and fish catch size have changed drastically. Increased scales of investment and enhanced harvesting technologies are leading to a concentration of ownership in fewer hands, centralized landings, landings in fewer centres, and changes in the location and distribution of fish available to the post-harvest sector, with direct impacts on women fish processors and traders as well as consumers (Béné, Macfadyen and Allison, 2007). While these changes often increase the economic efficiency of fisheries value chains, they may cause a trade-off in terms of other policy objectives, including employment and food security. The following case study from Kerala, India, brings out some of these issues.

Case study 14: Impact of harbour fishing on fish trade in Kerala, India

In Kerala, India, the adoption of modern practices by small-scale fisheries actors (e.g. the use of larger vessels in ring seining) has led to fish landings moving away from traditional beaches to harbours. For women fish sellers, who used to buy fish at the local beach, the long distances they must now travel to reach the harbours has made it more difficult for them to buy fish and therefore to continue in the fish trade. At the same time, advances in fish preservation, including better cold storage techniques, mean that more fish is being sold fresh and less fish is available to women for processing.

There has also been a decline in fish catch, due to fish stock and labour shortages. As a result, fish is now brought in from neighbouring states, which women must buy from centralized harbours. This means paying in cash and transporting the fish over longer distances. Women address this challenge by pooling their resources to buy and transport in bulk (Gopal, Edwin and Meenakumari, 2014).

Let's analyse this...

The SSF Guidelines under **Para 7.2** recognize the important role of women in post-harvest activities, and require States to extend support to “enable women to retain and enhance their livelihoods”. This is of critical importance when women are marginalized by modernization and other developments in the fisheries sector. **Para 7.8** further highlights the problem of overexploitation driven by market demand that can threaten the sustainability of fisheries resources, and hence calls for responsible post-harvest policies and practices that benefit small-scale fishers in an equitable manner. State policies in Kerala from the 1960s promoted the adoption of modern fishing practice within the small-scale fisheries sector. The provisions in the SSF Guidelines on policy coherence (**Para 10.3** on harmonization of policies and **Para 10.4** on ecosystems-based approach) are also relevant in this situation.

Action points for policy-makers

1. Ensure protection of traditional rights of women fishers during fisheries modernization, through measures supporting positive discrimination.
2. Support provision of facilities, including public transport, to allow women to compete equally in the changing contexts of the fisheries sector.

Action points for CSOs

1. Promote cooperative organizations of women fishers that enable them to better adjust to changing conditions.

As [Case study 14](#) shows, modernization within the small-scale fisheries sector can lead to centralized, harbour-based fish landings, severely undermining local access to fish and, in turn, impacting on the fish trade as a form of livelihood for women in the sector.

Competition in post-harvest roles and other threats

Women in fish processing and trade in many parts of the world face increasing competition from other users over both fishery resources and the environment – i.e. land and water – in which these resources exist. As discussed earlier, with the spread of modern technologies like refrigeration and better transport links, competition from external buyers with greater access to financial resources is on the rise. Also competing for fish are ever-increasing numbers of people, including migrants, looking to fisheries for survival.

The impact of competition from other sectors has already been illustrated, and together with other threats such as coastal erosion, may cause women fish processors and traders to lose traditional access to landing bays for buying fish, or to land for fish drying and processing. These changes affect women's livelihoods directly, increasing their reliance on intermediaries to negotiate access for post-harvest activities. Relationships with intermediaries however can be coercive, leading to economic and social dependencies. In Tunisia, for instance, the role of intermediaries restricts the price that women fish traders get for clams to around one-tenth of the final selling price (see [Box 15](#)).

As the following examples from Africa in [Case study 15](#) illustrate, the increased vulnerability of women may give rise to various forms of coercive power arrangements within traditional fishery practices.

Case study 15: Impact of competition along Lake Victoria in Kenya and on inland fisheries in Zambia

In Kenya, in the Lake Victoria region, the fish trade is facilitated by traditional forms of organization. One is the jakambi relationship of a fishmonger to the captain of a fishing boat, whereby the fishmonger gets first priority on sale of the fish catch in exchange for soft credit. The other is the rotating credit association. Here, members contribute a regular amount in exchange for access by rotation to a common pool of funds, which are used to finance the fish trade that they profit from. In the past, both the jakambi and the credit associations operated within kinship/clan networks. However, with fish trade opening up to migrants, new jakambi relationships and credit associations of migrants have been established. Often, in the new jakambi relationships, women fishmongers are expected to provide sexual favours in addition to soft loans (Markussen, 2002), with potential impacts on their health and overall well-being.

In Zambia, on the Kafue River, fishing is done mainly by the local Batwa people, with women involved in fish processing and trade. As the perception of the fish trade as a profitable activity has increased, more and more male traders have been arriving at the fish camps, thus increasing the competition for fish. This in turn has driven a practice termed “fish-for-sex”, in which women who have boyfriends in the fishing camp are assured a supply of better and cheaper fish. The relationship may also be coercive, with fishers refusing to sell fish to traders without sex. In one study, 31 percent of female fish traders said they had “boyfriends” among the fishers in the camps (Béné and Merten, 2008).

The study also indicated that 91 percent of fish-for-sex practices in Africa happened in inland fisheries, particularly in lake fisheries, and that HIV prevalence among fishing communities could be as high as 4 to 14 times The average across all African nations. These findings were related to poverty, to the subordinate role of women, and to sexual-cultural norms. Mobility among fishers was thought to be a cause of their increased vulnerability to HIV, leading to speculation that the

practice of fish-for-sex could also be a factor in the spread of HIV in fishing communities in Africa (Béné and Merten, 2008). WorldFish, together with FAO, has implemented a project titled “Fisheries and HIV/AIDS in Africa: Investing in sustainable solutions”, which seeks to foster women’s engagement in the fish trade through various means of economic support. These include a loan fund to help women traders stabilize their businesses, and the promotion of associations of women traders. The project also provides additional services, including awareness-raising on HIV/AIDS and provision of health care within fishing communities and migrant camps (Weeratunge and Snyder, 2009).

Let’s analyse this...

Para 7.1 of the SSF Guidelines acknowledges the need for special support for marginalized groups in the context of unequal power relationships that prevail between value chain actors. Provisions related to decent work also apply in this case, including **Para 6.7** (the right to work in accordance with international human rights standards) and **Para 6.12** (occupational health issues and unfair working conditions). In cases of coercive sexual transactions, **Para 6.9** (right to carry out fisheries activities in an environment free from sexual abuse) and **Para 6.13** (eradication of forced labour) would also be applicable.).

Action points for policy-makers

1. Support access to easy credit and other facilities for women in the post-harvest fisheries sector.
2. Regulate the fisheries sector to ensure that women are not subject to coercive relations in their work.
3. Support the monitoring of working conditions for women in the post-harvest sector, through research and working with women’s organizations.
4. Provide health care, including regular health monitoring facilities, for women in the sector.

Action points for CSOs

1. Promote organizations of women workers to safeguard their rights and resist oppressive practices.
2. Raise women’s awareness of the hazards and health risks in their work.

With regards to the practice of fish-for-sex, questions have been raised about the power relations that shape women’s experience of fish trading, and the extent to which women in these contexts are in control over their bodies and sexual choices (Weeratunge and Snyder, 2009).

Globalization and trade liberalization

Trade plays a major role in terms of economic growth, income generation and employment for developing countries. Trade in fish destined for human consumption increased by more than five times in the period between 1976 and 2014 (FAO, 2016c). Exports from developing economies increased

from 37 percent to 54 percent in this period (FAO, 2016c). Developing countries have participated in multilateral mechanisms, such as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO), to reduce traditional trade barriers for better access to foreign markets. This has also contributed to the industrialization of fish production and processing. Shorter supply chains in export-oriented fisheries directly affect fish processing and trade where women's work is concentrated. For instance, increasing levels of fish exports from Africa have created new jobs in fish processing factories. However, there is evidence that for every new factory job, six to eight jobs are lost in informal fish processing (Dey de Pryck, 2013).

Women may find it difficult to benefit directly from international trade. For example, in the Gambia, women are engaged in small-scale fish trading. They buy small quantities of fish for retail in urban markets. The export of processed fish to Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria and other countries, however, is done primarily by male traders. Men also control the more lucrative fresh fish exports to the European Union. To enable women to equally benefit, their capacities would need to be developed, in line with **Para 7.10** of the Guidelines which specifically calls on States to improve the capacity of women and enable them to benefit equitably from global market opportunities, while minimizing potential negative impacts.

Demand pressures from international markets can also lead to illegal practices with long-term negative impacts. For instance, the harvesting of immature Nile Perch in Kenya is a result of the export-driven demand for fillets. In Brazil, the catching of immature lobsters is fuelled by an illegal market in the United States of America. These unsustainable practices threaten the livelihood basis of women in those value chains.

All of this has important policy implications for governments. [Case study 16](#) illustrates the impact of industrialization on women involved in post-harvest activities in South Africa, bringing out some of the contradictions that accompany industrialization and trade in the fisheries sector for women.

Case study 16: Impact of industrialization on women in small-scale post-harvest fisheries in South Africa

In South Africa, in the Western and Northern Cape provinces, women were traditionally engaged in pre- and post-harvest activities associated with catching line fish, net fish and rock lobster. With the establishment of the industrial fishing sector, many turned to seasonal work in industrial processing and packing plants. The working conditions in these factories were often exploitative with limited or no rights of workers to health care, maternity leave, compensation for accidents at the workplace, pensions, and other dues. The removal of limits on working hours further burdened the women workers, many of whom also had children and families to look after.

The removal of apartheid-related restrictions cleared the path for South Africa's entry into global markets, including global fisheries. Fish and seafood began to be caught and processed offshore, or shipped live to northern markets. This further reduced the employment opportunities available for women in small-scale fisheries living in these provinces, with those employed in fish processing and packing factories facing job loss due to factory closure (Sunde, 2016).

Let's analyse this...

The SSF Guidelines in **Para 7.8** require States and other actors to ensure that the benefits of international trade are fairly distributed. In particular, they require States to ensure equitable benefits to small-scale fisheries throughout the value chain. **Para 7.9** requires State policies to ensure that adverse impacts of international trade on small-scale fisheries livelihoods are addressed.

Action points for policy-makers

1. Recognize women's working rights in the fish processing industry, and regulate women's work to ensure compliance with all labour standards.
2. Determine the impact of trade policies on women's work and livelihoods, and take measures to mitigate any ill effects.

Action points for CSOs

1. Promote organizations of women workers in factories to safeguard their rights.
2. Join international alliances of CSOs to secure rights of workers employed in global supply chains and affected by global trade.

This case study brings out the tensions industrialization can create in the lives of the poor and vulnerable. For women displaced from traditional jobs and for migrant women, work in fish processing factories is often the lone survival option. However, if the terms of employment are precarious and unreliable, women's vulnerability persists, and their true empowerment is inhibited. In Africa, the African Confederation of Artisanal Fishing Professional Organizations (CAOPA) has identified the issues vital to the African small-scale fisheries context, including guaranteed access to fishery resources and reforms in trade policies in recognition and support of women's roles, in the larger context of co-management and transparency (CAOPA, 2013).

Therefore, while international trade expansion often represents an opportunity, it can also pose a significant problem for women in small-scale fisheries who, both in processing and in trade, may not be able to either compete or easily adapt to the demands of the global market.

In addition to the impact of industrialization in terms of reduced access to fish and deteriorating working conditions in processing, there are additional challenges related to globalized value chains. In the context of trade liberalization and globalization, there has been a reduction in traditional barriers to trade, such as tariffs and quantitative restrictions. However, there has been a simultaneous increase in the use of non-tariff barriers related to food, sanitary and environmental safety standards (Ahmed, 2006) by industrialized countries, which are often hard to meet for women in small-scale fisheries in developing countries without related capacity development and access to technology and infrastructure. This increase in standards has also led to growing numbers of certification schemes and codes of practice that seek to establish greater traceability (Béné, Macfadyen and Allison, 2007). Although certification and labelling schemes are associated with the promise of access to niche markets and higher prices, they also introduce potential distortions to existing practices and livelihoods. In addition, the relatively high costs and large data requirements associated with certification may rule out the equitable participation of small-scale producers (Gardiner and Viswanathan, 2004). Furthermore, these measures are not gender-neutral, and may impact the lives of women in traditional post-harvest in many ways, for example by vesting power with intermediaries and displacing women from local fish processing and trade (Gardiner and Viswanathan, 2004). At the same time, it has to be

noted that women in some cases (e.g. in some African and Caribbean countries) are playing the role of intermediaries and could potentially contribute to allowing small-scale fishing communities to benefit from these global developments, by acting as a source of information about market requirements and as a connection between demand and supply.

Regional trade

In many countries, women routinely trade small-scale fisheries products across national borders at the regional level, often in an informal manner which facilitates access to those markets and is not constrained by border regulations. The liberalization of trade, especially for processed fish products, also stimulates growth in the fish processing industry, providing employment to women as small entrepreneurs and wage workers.

Local initiatives to support regional cooperation for fish trade among women traders, like the West African fish trade fair organized in Dakar, Senegal (see [Box 7](#)) can become drivers of sustainable value addition. Such initiatives also conform to **Para 7.3** and **Para 7.4** of the SSF Guidelines that call upon States and development partners to provide infrastructure and develop organizational capability for women in small-scale fisheries.

At the same time, in regional trade, borders and checkpoints can be a source of harassment for female small-scale fish traders.

They risk incurring post-harvest losses from the delays they are subjected to, and financial losses because of the bribes they have to pay for example in some African markets (Béné Macfadyen and Allison, 2007). Changes in geopolitical situations can also have an impact on the ability of women to thrive as trade entrepreneurs in a regional context.

The SSF Guidelines (under **Para 7.7**) call upon States to consider the impact of international trade on local small-scale fisheries actors, including women. This should be applicable both for laws governing international trade within countries, and regulation of trade arrangements between countries. [Case study 17](#) shows how men and women have different experiences of cross-border licensing and tariff regimes at the Thailand–Cambodia border.

Box 7: West African Fair for Artisanal Processed Fish

The small-scale fisheries sector is a vital source of livelihood for the communities that live along the approximately 4 545 km coastline of West Africa. There are around 1.8 million people, mostly women, directly engaged in fish processing and marketing in the region. Despite the vibrancy of the trade, several problems confront the sector, and the importance of women processors and traders remains unrecognized.

In 2001, a unique fish trade fair took place in Dakar, Senegal. The West African Fair for Artisanal Processed Fish was organized by the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF), in collaboration with the Collectif National des Pecheurs Artisans du Senegal (CNPS) and the Centre de Recherches pour le Developpement des Technologies Intermediaires de Pêche (CREDETIP), with support from the FAO-DFID Sustainable Fisheries Livelihoods Programme.

Thirteen countries in the West African region – Senegal, the Gambia, Guinea, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Mali, Guinea-Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Burkina Faso and Mauritania – participated in the workshop. Participants included representatives of artisanal fishworkers, fish processor and trader organizations, and governmental and non-governmental organizations working with and providing support to artisanal fishing communities in the region.

The trade fair created a valuable forum for participants to exchange technologies and business experiences; share common problems; communicate directly with policy-makers and the general public; establish better trade networks; and learn about support services related to information, credit and technology resources available within the region.

Source: Sandouno, 2002.

Case study 17: **Issues of cross-border trade for traditional women fish vendors in Cambodia**

Until the late 1990s, the border between Thailand and Cambodia was a war zone. Ironically, this provided a favourable opportunity for Cambodian women fish traders in the Tonle Sap region to engage in cross-border fish trade. They had an advantage over male traders, enjoying greater mobility as they did not risk being considered war combatants. In the late 1990s, as the war subsided, control over fish trade moved into the hands of government agencies and the police. Fees were collected from traders, reportedly at 27 checkpoints along the streets from Tonle Sap to the border. Women fish traders were still able to conduct good business, and continued to prevail over male traders thanks to their negotiation skills with officers in charge of checkpoints. Beginning in 2006, however, the amount of fish available for exports started decreasing. This forced many downstream traders in Thailand to bypass the female traders and contact fishers directly, in order to ensure supply. As a result, the livelihood source of women fish traders began losing its viability (Kusakabe and Sereyvath, 2014).

Let's analyse this...

This case study illustrates the impact of the larger political environment on cross-border trade. The primary responsibility of mitigating the adverse effects of war on those engaged in the fish trade would rest with the respective governments. In this case, certain articles of the SSF Guidelines taken together provide the necessary implementation guidance: **Para 7.6**, which calls for States to facilitate access to international markets and support regional trade in small-scale fisheries products; and **Para 6.11**, which urges States to address underlying causes and effects of transboundary movement of fishers.

In this specific case, subsequent policies of instituting multiple checkpoints opened up opportunities for bribery, and later, trade policies stripped women traders of their livelihood source. **Para 10.1**, which calls for policy coherence for the holistic development of small-scale fishing communities, with special attention paid to ensuring gender equity and equality, is of particular relevance in this context.

Action points for policy-makers

1. Ensure cross-border trade regulations do not discriminate against women fish traders.
2. Facilitate women's work in cross-border trade by reducing the time and effort required in regulatory processes.

Action points for CSOs

1. Promote cooperative organizations of women to reduce the individual drudgery and difficulty of dealing with regulatory processes.
2. Promote support networks between women across trading borders.

Impact of international trade on food security

While the eradication of poverty and food security are key objectives of the SSF Guidelines, as well as the focus of the new Sustainable Development Goals 1 and 2, these are issues of particular relevance to women's lives, given the primary responsibility that women have towards meeting the food and nutritional requirements of their families. Any measure that directly or indirectly impacts food security therefore is of particular relevance from a gender point of view.

For many developing countries, fish represents an affordable source of protein. For instance, in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Ghana, Indonesia, Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka, fish constitutes at least half of animal protein intake (FAO, 2016c). Globally in 2016, the average annual per capita fish consumption in low-income food-deficit countries (LIFDCs) was 7.6 kg, compared with 26.8 kg in industrialized countries (FAO, 2016c). This is significant, as fish is a more important source of animal protein in developing and low-income regions than it is in industrialized countries. At the same time, fish exports remain an important income source for these countries (Dey de Pryck, 2013). The global fish trade can therefore lead to increased global inequality in average per capita animal protein availability. The relation between international trade in fish products and domestic food security must be carefully assessed in each context. The SSF Guidelines (in **Para 7.7**) urge States to ensure that the "promotion of international trade and export promotion do not adversely affect the nutritional needs of people to whom fish is critical to a nutritious diet."

Key recommendations: Value chains, post-harvest and trade

For policy makers

Valorization of work

- Employ value chain analysis and other suitable methods (carried out in a timely manner) to identify, record and recognize as economic work all forms of work performed in pre-harvest, harvest and post-harvest activities, in both marine and inland fisheries and undertaken by both women and men.
- Recognize as workers women engaged in the pre-harvest, harvest and post-harvest fisheries sector, both in marine and inland fisheries, and hence extend to them the various social security and other benefits available to other workers in small-scale fisheries.
- Ascribe value to the activities of these women, in terms of share in value of fish sold and fish retained for food security, so that these activities can be brought within the framework of States' economic planning and policy processes.

Concentration of landing infrastructure

- Recognize the problems caused by the centralization of fish landings from beaches to harbours for women engaged in post-harvest activities in small-scale fisheries, and provide support through:
 - safe public transport to harbours and markets;
 - access to fish through State procurement agencies;
 - market and credit access.

Improving post-harvest efficiency

- Formulate policies to specifically address issues of post-harvest loss, including prevention and recovery, paying special attention to the specific needs of women.
- Support the introduction of low-investment technology that can reduce drudgery of work and improve market access for women in the post-harvest sector.
- Ensure easy and affordable access to credit, loans and microfinance, as well as savings, insurance and other services, to allow women in fisheries to sustain and improve their livelihoods.

Market access

- Recognize that access to a secure, hygienic and regulated marketplace is one of the main demands of women in the fish trade. State departments should ensure secure market access for women, and promote women's participation and leadership in managing market premises.

Regulation of fish trade

- When finalizing international fish trade policies, balance the needs of economic growth and development with those of small-scale fishers and domestic markets. The needs of women in the fish trade should be given particular attention.

- > Regulate illegal trading, which can affect local fish availability for processing, trade and food security.
- > Ensure efforts are taken to mitigate the potential ill effects of regulation on women in the fish trade.

Key recommendations

For CSOs

- › Work with women in fishing communities towards getting recognition for the activities that women perform in fish value chains, be these paid or unpaid, part-time or full-time.
- › Work with women in communities to understand and document the role and contributions of women in local fish value chains.
- › Work with women in communities to understand and document the specific needs and barriers facing women in local fish value chains.
- › In collaboration with women in fishing communities, identify value addition opportunities in processing and trade.
- › Work with women in communities to understand the reasons for post-harvest losses and, where appropriate, facilitate the adoption of simple and efficient technology to address such losses.
- › Support State organizations and women in post-harvest work to improve work efficiency and profitability.
- › Work with women in the fish trade to identify core issues and needs in the context of increasing competition, and bring these to the attention of States.
- › Support cooperative efforts of women fish traders to combine resources in response to increased competition.
- › Work with women in fishing communities to secure better access to credit, savings, insurance and other services.
- › Assist women in communities to better understand international trade and the impact of particular trade policies and measures.
- › Ensure representation of women across the fish value chain in organizational activities and matters.



6. Gender equality

The SSF Guidelines is the first internationally negotiated instrument pertaining to small-scale fisheries that recognizes gender equity and equality as fundamental to development. The principles of gender equity and equality appear in the Guidelines in the following ways:

- › as part of a set of key guiding principles for the sector in [Chapter 3](#);
- › in a dedicated chapter, [Chapter 6: Gender Equality](#), which lays down specific guidelines on gender equality and gender mainstreaming;
- › as a cross-cutting theme, appearing throughout the text in various contexts.

The SSF Guidelines thus appear to endorse a strategy which involves both positive discrimination and special measures for women (represented by the inclusion of a dedicated chapter) as well as gender mainstreaming (represented by the inclusion of gender issues throughout the text). This dual strategy not only recognizes gender issues, it also makes possible the proper valuation of women's work, and ultimately the implementation of gender-equitable policies and practices. The terms gender, gender equity, gender equality and gender mainstreaming have already been defined and discussed in [Part 1](#).

[Chapter 6](#) of the SSF Guidelines discusses a range of issues and needs involving gender equality and gender mainstreaming. These may be classified into the following categories:

- › the need for gender-equitable and non-discriminatory policies, in line with international conventions;
- › the need for gender-equitable policy implementation through gender mainstreaming strategies;
- › the need for collaborative evaluation systems to ensure gender equality and equity in policy and practice.

These issues are discussed further in the following sections.

Gender-equitable and non-discriminatory policy

Para 8.2 of the SSF Guidelines urges States to comply with their obligations under international human rights law and to implement the instruments to which they are signatories in regard to gender equality, including, inter alia, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1986) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPfA, 1995).

This provision, first and foremost, underscores the need for States to commit to a process of policy change in favour of gender equity and equality. Several States already have gender policies in place at the national level (see [Box 8](#)) and it is important to assess whether these policies are effective in addressing the concerns of women in small-scale fisheries. A national policy on gender can serve as a useful framework of reference for policy-makers and administrators to conduct effective, gender-equitable fisheries governance; it can also serve to hold States accountable to the commitments they have made. Depending on the specific context, which necessarily differs from country to country,

policy measures may involve drafting gender-equitable fisheries policy, or mainstreaming issues of gender equity and equality into existing fisheries policy at the national, regional and local level. Such policy should be aligned with the full scope of the SSF Guidelines, with special attention paid to gender equity and equality in all aspects of fisheries governance and management. Where such a process involves finding consensus on what is meant by the term “small-scale fisheries”, it is very important to ensure that the whole fish supply chain, including the pre-harvest, harvest and post-harvest sectors, is fully represented in the definition.

Gender-equitable fisheries policy should necessarily be designed to eliminate all forms of gender discrimination in the fisheries sector. The discrimination women face in fisheries should be viewed in the overall context of their lives. For gender-equitable fishery policies to have any meaningful impact, the social, economic and cultural barriers that reinforce gender-based vulnerabilities must be identified and addressed in other sectors as well, through a slew of policy changes and implementation measures.

Box 8: The Philippine’s Magna Cara of Women

The Philippines is among the few countries of the world to have introduced formal legislation in an attempt to comprehensively secure women’s human rights. The Magna Carta of Women (MCW), also known as Republic Act No. 9710, seeks to eliminate all forms of gender discrimination through the recognition, protection, fulfilment and promotion of the rights of Philippine women. It outlines a framework of women’s rights that is based on international law, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

The MCW pledges to empower women through a range of positive measures including equal access to ownership, management, and control of production, as well as material and informational resources and benefits in the family, community and society. It affirms the rights of Philippine women to equality and non-discrimination in employment, law, education, marriage and family, as well as public participation; to protection from all forms of violence, including State violence; to comprehensive health care, food security, affordable housing, decent work and social protection; to access to credit, capital and technology, skills training, and information and decision-making processes; and to recognition and preservation of cultural identity. In addition, it seeks to protect the rights of women belonging to marginalized sectors.

The MCW defines as marginalized those who belong to vulnerable groups living in poverty without adequate access to entitlements. This includes, for example, small farmers and rural workers, fisherfolk, the urban poor, workers in the formal economy and informal economy, migrant workers, indigenous peoples, girl children, women senior citizens, and single parents. It defines as “fisherfolk” those who are directly or indirectly engaged in taking, culturing, or processing fishery or aquatic resources. This includes women engaged in fishing in municipal waters and coastal and marine areas; women workers in commercial fishing and aquaculture; vendors and processors of fish and coastal products; and subsistence producers such as shell-gatherers, managers and producers of mangrove resources, and other related producers.

Source: [Philippine Commission on Women website](#).

A significant area for policy attention is the under-representation of women's work in official data registers. The fisheries sector is generally conflated with the act of fishing, which in turn is seen as work that only men do. Women's work, mostly in post-harvest but also with a significant presence in the pre-harvest and harvest sectors, is undercounted and under-represented in official data collection. In the absence of robust data, policies formulated for the sector are, in effect, policies that benefit male fishers. Women fishers and their communities therefore fail to receive the critical resources and support they need, and consequently suffer further marginalization. According to FAO, the important data gaps to be filled include employment data disaggregated by gender and age, as well as data on post-harvest and service sectors, which would greatly improve the understanding of the importance of women's contribution to fisheries, food security and livelihoods (FAO, 2016c).

Gender-equitable policy implementation

One of the first steps in correcting the policy neglect of women in fisheries is through implementing measures to capture the full value of women's work in the sector. This involves changing, where necessary, conventional data collection systems and techniques to eliminate fundamental gender biases – beginning with, for instance, the definitions used for basic terms like “fishing” and “fisher” (Kleiber *et al.*, 2015); the sampling methods employed; the competencies of participating field staff; and the level of involvement of women themselves (and not, for example, male proxies) in the data collection exercise.

Achieving gender equality requires concerted efforts by all parties, and the SSF Guidelines (Para 8.1) endorse the strategy of gender mainstreaming to achieve gender equality in the small-scale fisheries sector. At the same time, however, the Guidelines also recognize that gender mainstreaming strategies cannot be uniform across societies and cultures (Para 8.1). When challenging gender-discriminatory practices, such strategies must be mindful of the larger context in which change is being proposed. Rather than following a one-size-fits-all or toolkit-type approach, gender mainstreaming strategies must evolve out of specific local contexts, in close collaboration with women in the community and local fisheries administrators. [Case study 18](#) illustrates the pitfalls of excluding women from the decision-making process.

Case study 18: The risks of neglecting women in policy implementation

In the Congo in 2005, the fisheries administration held discussions with male fishers of Makotipoko on the Congo River in order to agree on a set of new measures to protect fisheries. Women, however, were not included in the discussions. As a consequence, the new regulations had measures that included banning certain fishing practices used by women. The women also were provided no information on the new measures being introduced.

In response to criticism, the community put in place a gender action plan, under which the effects of the new regulations on the livelihood of all community members would be assessed, and women would receive training on the newly introduced measures as well (FAO, 2007b).

Let's analyse this...

This case brings out the pitfalls of excluding women and their priorities from planning exercises. **Para 5.15** of the SSF Guidelines specifically urges equal participation of women in the design and planning of appropriate management measures. Although the new management plan violated this requirement, the community responded by putting in place its own gender action plan.

This was in line with the SSF Guidelines recommendation that gender equality and gender mainstreaming requires concerted efforts on the part of all parties (Para 8.1) as well as the need to assess the impact of legislation and policies on women (Para 8.3).

Action points for policy-makers

1. Ensure all officials (men and women) within fisheries departments understand, and have been trained on, gender mainstreaming-related concepts and practice.
2. Include participation of women from fishing and indigenous communities as a key criterion in discussions and consultations on policy issues for the small-scale fisheries sector.

Action points for CSOs

1. Provide education and training in gender mainstreaming for organizations of women and men within the small-scale fisheries sector, and within fishing communities.


Collaborative evaluation systems for gender equity and equality

[Case study 18](#) demonstrates that gender-equitable fisheries policy measures can be effective only if they are implemented in collaboration with the intended recipients of these measures. Implementation efforts must therefore involve women fishers and their legitimate representatives in the community. In addition, feedback loops and communications channels must be established at the very outset to ensure that policy implementation and regulation leads to gender-equitable outcomes.

Women stand to gain from the effective use of gender mainstreaming strategies in many ways. Gender mainstreaming can be a starting point to question patriarchy within families and in traditional societies. This would allow women to better articulate their demands for livelihood rights and rights at the workplace, and to argue for policy that is more inclusive of gender needs and issues.

The gains from gender mainstreaming are not restricted to individual women and their access to greater independence and improved livelihood. There are several examples of the increased participation of women resulting in more inclusive and democratic group work. For example, in Cambodia, women who participated in fisheries management were more transparent in their actions, better communicators, and better resource managers. The benefits of involving women in leadership extend beyond fisheries resource management to fostering community well-being (including better awareness of domestic violence), increased school attendance of children, and greater participation of women in local politics (Lentisco and Lee, 2015).

Implementing organizations, including government agencies and administrative bodies, civil society organizations, research organizations and others intervening in the lives of women in fishing communities, must make sure that the policies and practices within their own organizations adhere to the principles of gender equity and equality, and are free from gender discrimination at every level. Gender mainstreaming, like charity, needs to begin at home.



States, development agencies and civil society organizations can make a significant difference by including gender mainstreaming in their work within the small-scale fisheries sector. Getting women to participate in decision-making would challenge discrimination and help democratize communities. Women's participation would make for stronger and more resilient communities, with greater commitment to sustainability.

Key recommendations: Gender equality

For policy makers

Gender policy

- › Introduce, in line with existing national gender policies, or international instruments like CEDAW and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, a gender policy for women in small-scale fisheries, in consultation with women representing the small-scale fisheries sector across the full value chain.
- › Formulate gender-equitable fisheries policies in different regions in line with national policy, and with participation of local women representatives of small-scale fisheries.
- › Examine and adapt legislation and laws, including traditional practices, to make them compatible with gender equality in the small-scale fisheries sector.

Gender mainstreaming

- › Introduce gender mainstreaming in government agencies dealing with small-scale fisheries, including with all male and female state officers having direct dealings with the small-scale fisheries sector, and establish gender focal points if possible.
- › Introduce gender mainstreaming with government labour departments responsible for regulation of employment in industrial fish processing.
- › Work with women fisher/civil society organizations to derive models and recommendations for gender mainstreaming based on locally specific social analyses of gender relations.
- › Work with women fisher/civil society organizations to reform cultural value systems and practices that are oppressive, exploitative and violent to girls and women.

Key recommendations

For CSOs

- › Give attention to gender mainstreaming within all representative organizations of small-scale fishers and of women employed in industrial fish processing.
- › Address the issue of gender mainstreaming within communities and families in the small-scale fisheries sector.
- › Work with States and women fishers and fishworkers to analyse locally specific gender relations, using these to derive models and recommendations for gender mainstreaming.
- › Work with States and fishing communities to reform cultural value systems and practices that are oppressive, exploitative and violent to girls and women.
- › Implement gender mainstreaming meaningfully and at all levels within civil society organizations working with small-scale fishing communities.
- › Act as watchdogs to evaluate the effectiveness of State legislation, policies and action in the small-scale fisheries sector in terms of improving gender equality.



7. Disaster risks and climate change

Over the last few decades, natural and human-induced disasters have become more frequent and destructive, with small-scale fishers and fishing communities becoming more and more vulnerable to the risk of disasters, and consequently suffering serious disaster-related losses of life and property (FAO, 2007a). Global impacts of climate change are increasingly being felt, with communities dependent on fisheries and rain-fed agriculture possibly the most vulnerable to climate change impacts (Yap, 2011). Within such communities, however, the impacts of disaster are not evenly distributed. Women and girls are more likely to be negatively affected than are men, and face greater barriers to reducing their vulnerabilities and coping with the effects of disasters (UN Women, 2015).

What is a disaster?

A disaster is defined as a sudden and calamitous event that seriously disrupts the functioning of a community, resulting in human, material, and economic or environmental losses. It is important to understand that disasters occur because of the impacts of hazards, either natural or human-induced, on vulnerable people.

A natural phenomenon, such as an earthquake or a storm, is a hazard; it is not a disaster in itself. A hazard becomes a disaster when people are affected, or costs (such as property losses) are incurred. Disaster risk could be considered an outcome of three interacting factors (ADRC, 2005):

- > occurrence of a hazard (such as a storm or earthquake);
- > exposure (of people or property) to the hazard; and
- > vulnerability (diminished ability to resist) of those exposed to the hazard.

As is evident from the foregoing, communities can be more or less susceptible to disasters, depending on their degree of vulnerability. Vulnerability is largely linked with high population densities, inadequate infrastructure, environmental degradation and poverty. An estimated 92 percent of all disasters worldwide occur in countries with low and medium development indexes (Yap, 2011). Gender is a powerful source of vulnerability, and women in small-scale fishing communities are highly susceptible to disaster risk.

What is climate change?

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) defines climate change as a change in climate which can be attributed directly or indirectly to human

Figure 4: Understanding disaster risk



Source: ADRC, 2005

activity, and which alters climatic conditions and global atmospheric compositions beyond the natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods (UNFCCC, 1992). Although climate change has a global impact on livelihoods and food production systems, its impact on the fisheries and aquaculture sector is distinct and specific, causing far-reaching changes to marine and freshwater ecosystems, reducing livelihood options, and compromising food security (FAO, 2009a) (see [Box 9](#)). Increasingly, climate change is seen to have a direct bearing on the more severe disasters occurring all over the world. Certain country groups, such as least developed countries (LDCs) and small island developing States (SIDS), are at higher risk due to factors such as geographical and economic vulnerability (Monnereau *et al.*, 2015).

The effects of climate change have an impact on both men and women in small-scale fishing communities; however, there are gender-specific differences. Women tend to be more natural resource-dependent than men in both their economic and non-economic activities, such as collecting water, gathering fuelwood, and gleaning fish for domestic consumption, as well as engaging in fish processing as an economic activity. In a post-climate disaster situation, they are not able to transition out of these tasks as easily as men, for whom options like migration or seeking work outside the sector are more easily available. This can lead to the breakup of families and communities, adding to women's existing vulnerabilities (Daw *et al.*, 2009).

Box 9: Climate change impacts on small-scale fisheries

Ecosystem impacts

- › Warming of oceans and other water bodies
- › Sea level rise
- › Migration of fish to cooler waters
- › Localized extinction of fish species
- › Changes in fish migration patterns
- › Spread of disease and toxic algal blooms
- › Ocean acidification affecting coral reefs, estuaries and other coastal resources, with changes in associated ecosystems and fisheries
- › Increased risks of species invasions and spread of vector-borne diseases
- › Variable climate patterns (e.g. El Niño) and extreme weather events (e.g. floods, droughts and storms)

Livelihood and food security impacts

- › Changes in fishing practices as a result of changes in fish distribution Extreme weather events impacting on infrastructure such as landing sites, post-harvest facilities and transport routes
- › Extreme weather events impacting on infrastructure such as landing sites, post-harvest facilities and transport routes
- › Reduced livelihood opportunities in fisheries and reduced options for livelihood diversification

- › Increased competition for resource access, risk from extreme events, and occupational change in areas such as post-harvest, in which women currently play a significant role
- › Food security impacts, including availability of, stability of, access to and utilization of aquatic food products

Source: Cochrane *et al.*, 2009.

The effects of climate change have an impact on both men and women in small-scale fishing communities; however, there are gender-specific differences. Women tend to be more natural resource-dependent than men in both their economic and non-economic activities, such as collecting water, gathering fuelwood, and gleaning fish for domestic consumption, as well as engaging in fish processing as an economic activity. In a post-climate disaster situation, they are not able to transition out of these tasks as easily as men, for whom options like migration or seeking work outside the sector are more easily available. This can lead to the breakup of families and communities, adding to women's existing vulnerabilities (Daw *et al.*, 2009).

Vulnerability of women in disasters

A study of the London School of Economics showed that women and children were 14 times more likely to die or be injured in a disaster than men (Neumayer and Plumper, 2007 – see Box 10).lists several other examples of how gender plays a role in determining the nature of injury and death during disasters.

Many different forms of natural disasters befall small-scale fishing communities in different regions. These include cyclones and tsunamis in coastal areas; floods in inland fishing communities; earthquakes; droughts that greatly impact on the livelihood and food security of communities; and epidemics, like HIV, among migrant communities. While each type of disaster has its own specific impacts, certain impacts are common to all natural disasters:

- › Disasters result in loss of life or serious disabilities, and anecdotal evidence suggests that women are often more directly affected (see [Box 10](#)). When women die or are disabled, the entire household suffers, including the children and the elderly.
- › Disasters generally result in loss of livelihoods, including the destruction of productive assets like boats, drying facilities and so on. Women are also affected by loss of livelihoods. If these are not quickly restored, many women are forced to migrate in search of immediate livelihood opportunities.
- › Disasters cause destruction of infrastructure, including houses, roads and essential services, all of which are vital to families.
- › Disasters disrupt lives of children, particularly when school facilities are destroyed. It is important to get these facilities up and running soon in order to give children a sense of security and continuity, and also to allow parents to get their lives back in order.
- › Disasters bring illness and epidemic in their wake. Health care becomes an urgent necessity. The burden often falls more on women in the community to arrange for care, and to help out with families where women have been killed or seriously affected.
- › In the immediate aftermath of disasters there is a need to arrange relief of food, clothing, medicine

and other goods. Women's access to relief material is usually limited, and women-headed households often get neglected in the distribution process.

- › Anecdotal evidence suggests that there may be post-disaster increases in gender-based violence, including intimate partner violence, sexual violence, child abuse and neglect.¹⁵

An important reason for greater levels of vulnerability among women is their relative powerlessness. Typically, women have lower access to information and education. Poor literacy is an obstacle to early warning on disasters and information on climate change. Low access to assets, including post-disaster relief, and low levels of health make women more vulnerable in post-disaster situations. In the aftermath of the tsunami in India in 2004, while coastal rehabilitation efforts sought to restore assets for men, including boats and nets, little attention was paid to the economic assets required by women (Joseph, 2007).

Box 10: Gendered impacts of disasters

- › More than 70 percent of the dead from the 2004 Asian tsunami were women.
- › Hurricane Katrina, which struck New Orleans, USA in 2005, predominantly affected African American women – already the region's poorest, most marginalized community.
- › An estimated 87 percent of unmarried women and 100 percent of married women lost their main source of income when Cyclone Nargis hit the Ayeyarwaddy Delta in Myanmar in 2008.
- › The 1991 cyclone in Bangladesh killed 140 000 people. Within the 20–44 age group, the female death rate was 71 per 1 000, compared with 15 per 1 000 for men.
- › Data from the Philippines show that over the last two decades, 15 times as many infants have died in the 24 months following typhoon events as have died during the typhoons themselves. Most of them were infant girls.
- › Men and boys may face gender-based vulnerabilities. For example, in certain cultural contexts, men may be expected to take more risks, or boys may take longer to recovery from trauma due to certain behavioural expectations.

Source: United Nations, 2014.

Planning for disasters – gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction (DRR)

A mid-term review of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005–2015, which aims at building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters, noted a lack of progress in the area of gender equality. The majority of countries had failed to collect gender-disaggregated vulnerability and capacity information. The review further found that despite the increased articulation of the importance of gender mainstreaming at the policy level, it is still far from becoming a common practice in disaster risk reduction and response interventions (United Nations, 2014).

¹⁵ See, for example, WHO (2005).

Women rarely occupy decision-making positions and have little say in determining disaster and climate change mitigation policies. As a result, they become more vulnerable in post-disaster situations, which increase gender inequalities and perpetuate gender-determined roles. The potential contribution of women, including their leadership in building communities' resilience to disasters, often gets overlooked (UNISDR, UNDP and IUCN, 2009). However, at the same time, disasters often bring out strong leadership capabilities among women, which can help considerably in "building back better", not only in terms of community resources but also in changing established gender hierarchies.

In this context, it becomes important for women in communities to be part of processes to design and formulate gender-sensitive disaster relief and rehabilitation policies. [Box 11](#) highlights the areas that are critical. These include proper planning, which should start with mapping vulnerabilities; collecting gender-disaggregated data on rights and ownership of assets within communities; and accessing capacities within communities. Further, women's entitlements to services during disaster relief and rehabilitation should be clearly documented and included in a legal framework. Women from the community should be part of this mapping exercise.

Capacity assessment should concentrate on identifying women who can play leadership roles. These roles should include understanding early warning systems and participating in drills for early action based on warnings. In the event of a disaster, identified women leaders should have formal responsibility in specific roles of the disaster rehabilitation plan, including relief distribution, participation in deciding and prioritizing rehabilitation actions, dealing with children's issues (including setting up interim systems for child care and schooling), and addressing specific needs of the aged and vulnerable.

Box 11: Input indicators for gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies

- › Promote the equal participation and leadership of women and men.
- › Promote women's equal access to information, including early warning, training, education and capacity building to strengthen their self-reliance and ability to claim their rights.
- › Strengthen the systematic collection and use of sex- and age-disaggregated data, as well as gender analysis in vulnerability, risk, damage and loss assessments, and contingency planning.
- › Strengthen the integration of gender equality commitments into legal frameworks, institutional commitments, organizational arrangements and capacity development, monitoring and accountability frameworks, and in the overall planning cycle of disaster risk management.
- › Ensure women's legal entitlement and practical access to assistance and services in relation to disaster management, such as basic health services (including reproductive and sexual health services), compensation, cash transfers, insurance, social security, credit and employment.
- › Minimize protection risks related to disasters and DRR efforts in line with the do no harm principle, along with commitments to prevent and respond to gender-based violence.
- › Enhance integration of sexual and reproductive health and rights into disaster risk reduction efforts.

- › Recognize and strengthen women's organizations and networks at the national, regional and global level.
- › Establish and maintain disaster risk reduction accountability, planning and monitoring mechanisms, with the involvement of women at the grassroots level, and other public and private stakeholders at the local and national level.
- › Strengthen the integration of gender equality considerations across sectoral efforts to mainstream disaster risk reduction.

Source: United Nations, 2014.

Managing disaster rehabilitation

Para 9.7 of the SSF Guidelines calls on States to apply the concept of the “relief–development continuum” and relate disaster preparedness to long-term objectives of “building back better”, with rehabilitation and reconstruction including actions to reduce vulnerability to future threats. **Para 9.2** calls for a participatory approach, with fishing communities brought into consultation and a focus on vulnerable and marginalized groups, including women. The two provisions together form an excellent guide for disaster relief and rehabilitation.

The relief–development continuum serves to link relief-related work to the income-generation needs of the affected communities, while addressing the building back of essential resources. The focus on participatory consultation, with special emphasis on women and marginalized groups, ensures that rehabilitation priorities are relevant, and inclusive of the needs of the most vulnerable.

However, different development priorities and competing economic interests often result in different responses to rehabilitation in disaster situations. In fact, post-disaster reconstruction is often viewed as big business, with a term coined for it – “disaster capitalism” (Klein, 2007). For instance in Sri Lanka, after the 2004 tsunami, the government appointed a Task Force for Rebuilding the Nation (TAFREN). After 17 days, the task force announced its plan, which included 62 townships, large harbours and super highways, and 15 tourism zones (Kumara, 2005). This form of intervention would not necessarily benefit affected communities, in particular in relation to traditional livelihoods like small-scale fisheries.

A more holistic approach for disaster risk reduction would involve reducing vulnerabilities, strengthening resilience and building adaptive capacities. These were the priorities of post-tsunami relief and recovery in Aceh, Indonesia (see [Case study 19](#)), where the rehabilitation outcomes included better and more stable recovery.

Case study 19: Post-tsunami rehabilitation in Aceh, Indonesia

In Aceh, Indonesia, fishing communities have a customary organization called the Panglima Laot (“Commander of the Sea”). During the post-tsunami relief in 2004, many aid organizations, focusing on “efficiency”, did not include the Panglima Laot in their programmes. A UN/FAO programme emphasizing co-management took the “approach of working with the Panglima Laot ... rather than through them”. The approach ensured a slower but more stable collaboration. In three years, five co-management initiatives were set up covering 25 percent of the coastline. The initiatives included having youth from the community work with district fisheries functionaries on fishery resource rejuvenation, and starting credit schemes with women to work with their husbands on responsible fishing (Kurien, 2013). Importantly, young women were actively included in this training so as to build future leaders.

Let's analyse this...

This case study highlights the effective implementation of strategies for adaptation and mitigation in full, effective consultation with fishing communities (Para 9.2). It describes the initiative of international organizations in involving women and youth as participants in co-management arrangements with successful results (Para 12.4). This participation specifically allowed women to start and access credit schemes, and to join men in working on responsible fishing (Para 12.2 focusing on SSF benefit from market opportunities). Finally, this is an example of promoting equitable participation of women in representative structures when starting credit schemes (Para 12.1).

Action points for policy-makers

1. Ensure strict compliance with locally applicable disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) protocols.
2. Lay down clear guidelines that encourage community participation, paying particular attention to encouraging women's leadership and central role in all relief and rehabilitation programmes, covering both government and non-government aid organizations.

Action points for CSOs

1. Understand locally applicable DRRM protocols, and discuss regulations for inclusion of community representatives (both women and men) in all government and non-government rehabilitation.

The case study on post-tsunami relief in Aceh illustrates the benefits of well-planned disaster relief and recovery strategies that are mindful of community dynamics, customary practice and gender equity.

The key role for States and other development partners would be to facilitate adaptive capacity within vulnerable communities. The concept of building back better should be followed so that post-disaster livelihoods, housing and other basic needs are restored in more robust and sustainable ways. Where disaster response takes the form of replacement of assets, due attention should be

paid to the needs of women, who in most cases are employees and wage workers, not asset owners – and therefore often left out of beneficiary lists (FAO, 2007a). In this context, attention should also be paid to ensuring that in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, women and men in communities are given assistance in finding gainful employment in the region and are not forced to migrate for work, which only adds to the already high sense of insecurity in the affected communities. [Box 12](#) presents a good example of such an approach.

Note that, in this case, the rehabilitation effort was notable for several reasons: it took a holistic view of the death of women victims in terms of loss of the household's primary caretaker; it tried to address the immediate need for jobs and incomes even as disaster recovery was underway; it tried to involve the whole community in rehabilitation efforts, thus building self-reliance; and, finally, through provisions like equal wage for equal work, it set an excellent example of how disaster rehabilitation can contribute towards gender equality.

Box 12: Rehabilitation following Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar

In May 2008, Cyclone Nargis struck Myanmar, causing widespread destruction of agriculture, fish and livestock, and leaving an estimated 140 000 people dead or missing. Of those who died, 61 percent were women, with a disproportionate number in the 18–60 age group. The Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS) immediately responded with cyclone relief, reaching out to nearly a million people. It further identified livelihood recovery for the most vulnerable households as its long-term programme objective in the region. The programme, implemented through a cash-for-work (CFW) project, was implemented in eight months, from October 2008 to May 2009. Some of the significant features of the project were as follows:

- › The project sought to restore community assets and infrastructure, linked to existing community livelihood systems.
- › The needs assessment was carried out by local volunteers, a third of who were women.
- › The project also sought to restore the natural environment affected by the cyclone.
- › A third of the beneficiaries employed under the CFW project were women.
- › Households headed by single women constituted 12 percent of those employed in CFW work.
- › Equal wages were paid to both men and women.

Source: IFRC, 2010.

Human-induced disasters – holding responsible parties accountable

The SSF Guidelines recognize that disasters can be human-induced – i.e. resulting from human action. **Para 9.4** requires that in such situations the responsible party should be held accountable. However, in cases where the disaster is caused by the activity of large business interests, the unequal power between such parties and small-scale fishing communities often results in a neglecting of regulation. While the immediate brunt of the disaster might be borne by fishing communities, the environmental degradation usually has a much wider, often incalculable, impact.

[Case study 20](#) highlights an example of pollution from an opencast gold mine that destroyed local habitat, with disastrous consequences for the health and well-being of members of small-scale fishing communities in Buyat Bay, Indonesia, ultimately undermining their access to tenure and livelihood.

Case study 20: Impact of mine pollution in Buyat Bay, Indonesia

The village of Buyat along the Buyat Bay and neighbouring villages depend on fishing, including coral fishing, for their livelihood. The women sell fish locally.

In the mid-1990s, with a mining lease from the Indonesian Government, a foreign private company set up an opencast gold mine on 500 hectares of leased land. It disposed of 2 000 tonnes of tailings (ore waste) every day directly into the sea. Studies by the North Sulawesi Agricultural University and the government's environment impact monitoring agency showed pollution of heavy metals, including cadmium, arsenic and mercury, in the area of the bay.

The villagers soon found that, over time, eating fish from the bay resulted in symptoms that they discovered only later were the result of arsenic poisoning. However, their petition to the provincial government at Sulawesi was only met with assurances that the tailings were being safely deposited on the sea floor, and that there was no pollution. Instead, the villagers were branded "subversive agents against foreign investment". International NGO campaigns at the shareholder meeting of the company only led to more repression at the local level. The company lease went up to 2004, and villagers were apprehensive that the company would by then take out all the gold, leaving behind a ruined bay (Ismail, 2003).

In a remarkable, first-of-its-kind case, the Indonesian Government decided to file a case against the company for environmental damages. The company settled with the government out of court for US\$30 million in 2005, a settlement challenged by many local civil society organizations (Down to Earth, 2007). The Indonesian courts dismissed the case against the company, stating that it should be taken to international arbitration (Down to Earth, 2005). The company denied any links between its activities and the health impacts on local people until a New York Times journalist got hold of internal documents detailing evidence of some aspects of these links (Down to Earth, 2007). The company responded to the case by filing a counter-defamation suit against local activists (Down to Earth, 2005).

Let's analyse this...

The SSF Guidelines are clear that in cases of human-induced disasters affecting small-scale fishing communities, the responsible parties should be held accountable (**Para 9.5**). This is in line with the universally agreed principle of "polluter must pay". Further, they also place responsibility on States to provide assistance to fishing communities affected by human-induced disasters (**Para 9.4**) The company and the provincial government of Sulawesi, as well as the Indonesian Government, are responsible under the SSF Guidelines for rehabilitation, measures in Buyat Bay, as well as compensation to villagers to regain their livelihood. The rehabilitation measures, in the spirit of building back better (**Para 9.7**), should also address the long-term effects on the health of local residents and consumers and their future generations. The SSF Guidelines also enjoin States to extend special support to small-scale fishing communities who are often the weaker party in conflicts with other sectors (**Para 5.9**), and also to ensure timely, affordable and effective means of resolving disputes (**Para 5.11**).

The difficulty faced by small-scale fishing communities in accessing recourse to international arbitration directly goes against these principles.

Action points for policy-makers

1. Formulate strict environmental guidelines for all coastal and inland water development, including industrial development, with clear provisions for compensation and mitigation of environmental damage.
2. Ensure that concessions that promote foreign investment in fisheries do not include dilution of environmental guidelines.
3. Include small-scale fishing community representatives (including women and men) as stakeholders in environmental monitoring of coastal and inland water development.

Action points for CSOs

1. Educate fisheries communities, particularly their women members, on any large development in their neighbourhood which might affect their environment and livelihood.
2. Support women in fishing communities to campaign against any harmful impact of development on their local environment.
3. Join international alliances of CSOs to ensure rights of fishing communities are not infringed by global companies.

This case demonstrates how difficult it is to hold polluting companies legally responsible for their actions. In developing countries, where the bulk of small-scale fisheries are to be found, environmental concerns may be subordinated to the imperatives of economic growth, and demands for environmental accountability could meet with hostility from States and judicial bodies. The legal route is often drawn out and resource-intensive, and companies and business interests may be able to stretch it even further through various levels of local courts and international arbitration. Further, in some cases business interests are also able to conceal vital information and use intimidating tactics to destroy or eliminate any opposition.

Frequently, as this case study shows, industrial pollution affects the source of food for local communities, with adverse impacts on the health of family members. This places additional burdens on women, since they have the primary responsibility for caregiving and for identifying alternative sources of food to sustain food security.

The vital role that women play in managing natural resources and meeting the food and nutritional requirements of the family, together with their important contributions towards enhancing community resilience, makes women significant agents of change whose knowledge and expertise can be drawn upon to shape effective disaster risk and climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies. Critically, women must be assisted at all levels, but particularly at local levels, to build organizational capacities and access democratic representation in order to intervene meaningfully in climate change policy, decision-making and practice.

Key recommendations: Disaster risks and climate change

For policy makers

Disaster risk reduction and management

- › Ensure that disaster risk management (DRM) policies are in place at the national, state and local levels, with special attention to the specific concerns of women in the small-scale fisheries sector.
- › Ensure that effective early warning systems and other mechanisms for disaster mitigation, such as cyclone shelters, are in place, with special attention paid to the needs of women and other vulnerable groups.
- › Ensure that disaster rehabilitation, reconstruction and recovery activities are aimed at building back better, in terms of livelihoods, housing and other needs, paying special attention to the needs of women and other vulnerable groups.
- › Adopt measures to enhance the resilience of disaster-prone communities, in both inland and coastal areas, by drawing on existing strengths, adaptive strategies and customary knowledge systems – particularly those of women in the community.

Human-induced disasters

- › Include mandatory environmental impact assessment (EIA) as a condition for setting up large industrial projects affecting the fisheries sector; the terms of the EIA should include the impact on lives and livelihoods of men and women in small-scale fisheries along the value chain.
- › Hold polluters responsible for all environmental damages, including cleanup, with liability to compensate fully for the livelihood and health losses of affected men and women in the small-scale fisheries sector.
- › In cases of companies found guilty of environmental pollution, hold relevant government representatives accountable where they are found directly responsible for granting environmental clearances and bypassing regulation.

Climate change policy

- › Ensure that a national climate change policy is in place that identifies potential climate impacts and hot spots, as well as vulnerable small-scale fishing communities.
- › Ensure that climate adaptation plans include adequate funds for small-scale fishing communities, with special attention to the needs of women, children and the elderly.

Key recommendations

For CSOs

- › In cases of natural disasters, work with State organizations in disaster relief and rehabilitation, and help ensure that women are included fully in rehabilitation measures.
- › Work with communities to develop women's leadership and disaster preparedness.
- › Build awareness among communities of industrial pollution impacts; support campaigns against polluting companies and legal struggles for compensation and rehabilitation; focus attention on the impact of pollution on women.
- › Work with State organizations to educate small-scale fishing communities on climate change impacts (with specific reference to the impact on women, children and the elderly) and to prepare climate adaptation plans.
- › Foster interregional cooperation among CSOs on climate change and related gender concerns, with specific emphasis on small-scale fisheries.

PART



Ensuring an enabling environment
for gender equality and
supporting implementation



8. Policy coherence, institutional coordination and collaboration

The SSF Guidelines call for the creation of an enabling environment for the effective implementation of its various provisions. There are many reasons why an enabling environment is vitally important for women in the small-scale fisheries sector:

- The small-scale fisheries sector is a more efficient and equitable employer than industrial fishing in terms of utilization and efficiency of catch, environmental parameters, and employment generation (see [Table 4: Comparison of efficiency parameters in capture fisheries](#)). Its gains are likely to trickle down more and to be redistributed more equitably over larger population groups, including women (FAO, 2004b).
- The small-scale fisheries value chain provides critical safety net alternatives for the poor, particularly for women who form the bulk of the unskilled and illiterate population, especially in rural areas.
- Most of the fish caught in the small-scale fisheries sector serves to meet direct human consumption needs, and thus the sector plays a vital role in poverty reduction and food security and nutrition, thereby addressing core gender concerns with respect to domestic food security.

An enabling environment therefore helps strengthen the sector and reinforces its significant social and economic contributions. It also offers States the opportunity to meet their international commitments towards human rights, gender equality and the SDGs.

According to FAO, some of the features that define an “enabling environment” are coherent sector policies and strategies as well as coordination across sectors, increased capacity development and organizational development, effective governance, and a lack of conflict (FAO, 2004b).

The small-scale fisheries sector is deeply affected not only by the actions of other stakeholders, such as competition from industrial fishing, industrial development, tourism and international trade, but also by environmental conservation measures like marine protected areas, if these are not established in an inclusive manner as management measures. These forces affect relations within fisheries and also within small-scale fishing communities. For instance, competition from industrial fisheries can push small-scale fishers towards increasingly unsustainable methods of fishing; likewise, increasing trade volumes can result in the entry of large capital into a sector hitherto dominated by small-scale women traders. Further, all these interactions are directly influenced by State policies, which may in turn be driven by conflicting priorities and objectives. The SSF Guidelines therefore stress the need for States to promote policy coherence¹⁶ within their national governance frameworks (**Para 10.1**). The SSF Guidelines further specify that policy coherence must involve the alignment of State policies with regard to, inter alia, international human rights law and other international

¹⁶ The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defines policy coherence as the “systematic promotion of mutually reinforcing policy actions across government departments and agencies creating synergies towards achieving the agreed objectives” (OECD, 2016).

obligations and commitments; national legal and institutional frameworks; policies for industrial development, including industrial fishing; trade policies; policies towards disaster risk and climate change adaptation; and small-scale fisheries policies, with special attention paid to gender equity and equality.

Broadly speaking, three main objectives usually determine State policies towards fisheries:

- > economic growth;
- > social justice, including gender equity;
- > environmental sustainability.

The policy outcomes of these objectives may often be contradictory. Within the small-scale fisheries sector, these objectives can translate into various needs, for example, the need for economic viability and for remaining competitive with respect to industrial fisheries; the need for foreign exchange earnings through fish trade, balanced with domestic food security demands; the need to maintain social justice in terms of maximizing livelihood options; and the need to maintain ecological sustainability for the long-term viability of the sector. In the short run, these different objectives may not be aligned.

Recognizing the complexities involved in balancing policy objectives, the SSF Guidelines urge States to strive for coherence between national policies affecting the interrelated health of coastal and inland ecosystems and policies on agriculture and other land uses, so that sustainability goals and livelihood interests are both maintained (Para 10.2 and Para 10.3). States are also urged to establish institutional structures to support the process of integrated policy implementation, and to foster regional and international cooperation to ensure the sustainability of small-scale fisheries (Para 10.5). In these efforts, States and other actors are required to uphold social justice, paying special attention to gender equity and rights of vulnerable and marginalized groups within small-scale fishing communities (Para 10.1 and Para 10.4).

Policy coherence and economic growth

It is important for States to harmonize various economic growth objectives with those of social justice and environmental sustainability. This requires identifying intersectoral policy conflicts, taking steps to mitigate negative outcomes in related sectors and building on synergies where possible. [Case study 14](#) has already demonstrated how policy initiatives designed to help small-scale fishers compete with the industrial fisheries sector in Kerala, India, ultimately resulted in the alienation of women from their traditional livelihoods in fish processing and trade. [Case study 21](#) presents the Kerala government's initiative to provide critical post-harvest support through a state-run agency, the Kerala State Co-operative Federation for Fisheries Development Ltd (or Matsyafed), as a good example of policy coherence.

Case study 21: Matsyafed in Kerala, India – an apex cooperative for small-scale fisheries

In India, the Kerala government in 1988 set up an apex federation of fishing cooperatives, Matsyafed, to provide support to cooperatives and to modernize and improve the competitiveness of the small-scale fisheries sector. In 2015, the federation had 666 primary cooperatives, of which 133 were women fishers' cooperatives. The cooperatives reached out to nearly 200 000 women, encouraging small savings groups and granting loans to women fish vendors.

It ran a bus service for women fish vendors, from landing site to marketplace and back in south Kerala, and set up community peeling centres for fish processing (D’Cruz, 2016).

Let’s analyse this...

Matsyafed is a good example of gender mainstreaming and policy coherence promotion in small-scale fisheries. The federation implements certain recommendations of the SSF Guidelines: for instance, **Para 10.5**, which requires States to promote institutional structures and linkages, including local and regional networks to encourage holistic and inclusive ecosystem approaches in the fisheries sector. Further, the federation’s support for women’s cooperatives and for transport and other livelihood services for women is aligned with the principle of gender equity (**Para 10.1**).

Action points for policy-makers

1. Promote and support the formation of small-scale fishing cooperatives, including cooperatives of women fishers.
2. Ensure, through the cooperatives, that access is provided for women to credit and infrastructure facilities in post-harvest processing and trade.

Action points for CSOs

1. Support the formation of cooperatives for women fishers.
2. Work with women in cooperatives to build capacity and leadership in small-scale fishing communities, particularly that of women.

The international fish trade provides opportunities for economic growth and generating export income that are of vital importance to countries. However, this trade also affects post-harvest activities, and hence livelihood options for women in fishing communities. These impacts are discussed in greater detail in the chapter on value chains, post-harvest and trade ([Chapter 5](#)). Trade agreements may also directly affect local food security for fishing communities. **Para 10.1** of the SSF Guidelines requires States to work towards policy coherence on trade policies and, in this context, to pay particular attention to ensuring gender equity and equality.

Box 13 illustrates, through the example of Senegal, the various objectives that fishing policy must balance. At a minimum, it must take into account the need to sustain livelihoods, the need to earn foreign exchange through export trade, and the need to maintain domestic and gender equity goals.

Policy coherence and social justice

State policy for enhancing social justice within the small-scale fisheries sector aims to ensure that policy benefits reach all members of communities, in particular women and other marginalized groups. The SDGs, though not legally binding, provide States with a framework for the harmonization of policies with respect to significant social justice goals, including (in addition to gender equality) the eradication of poverty, ensuring food security, and ensuring access to health, education, and water and sanitation.

A primary precondition for gender equality is the recognition of women's contribution to the small-scale fisheries sector. All rights and entitlements flow from this basic requirement; without it, women are virtually invisible in the sector. Acknowledging this, the SSF Guidelines urge States to recognize the full range of activities of the small-scale fisheries value chain as being economic and professional operations (Para 6.3). Therefore, whether women perform pre-harvest tasks, or harvest and glean or engage in fish processing and trade, they are fully entitled to equal social security benefits and services. [Case study 22](#) presents a contrasting picture of coverage under government schemes for men and women fishers in two states in India.

Box 13: Policy coherence in the context of the international fish trade

More than a third (around 37 percent) of fish catches worldwide are traded. Nearly half the exports by value originate from developing countries, and 85 percent of the traded fish goes to developed countries.

The potential impact of trade on livelihoods in developing countries can be seen in Senegal, where around 15 percent of the working population derives its livelihood from fishing; fish trade provides the country 50 percent of its export earnings; and 75 percent of animal protein for the local population comes from fish.

Source: Hudson, 2006.

Case study 22: Impact of seasonal fishing ban on women fish traders in Puducherry, India

In Puducherry and the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu in India, coastal fishing is banned for a period ranging from 45 days to two months, starting around mid-April. The ban affects the livelihoods of both men and women fishers. However, the coping strategies adopted by women and men differ.

The case study found that during the ban, women fish traders in Puducherry saw a five-fold drop in their wages, from around Rs3 500 (US\$52.6) to Rs650 (US\$9.7) per month. Women were four times more prepared than men to take up non-fisheries related work to tide over family needs. Therefore, during the ban period, the pressure to seek employment was greater on women. Women also resorted to other measures, including joining savings groups throughout the year so as to avail themselves of loans during the ban. Finally, women also reported that they cut down on their own nutritional requirements during the ban in order to feed their families. State governments in both Tamil Nadu and Puducherry provided relief schemes to support fisher families during the ban. In Tamil Nadu, the relief amount was Rs2 000 (US\$30), while in Puducherry it was Rs4 000 (US\$60). A more important difference is that in Puducherry, relief was available to all fisher households that had ration cards, while in Tamil Nadu, only families of registered fishermen were included in the relief effort – thus excluding women-headed fisher households in Tamil Nadu from the relief scheme (Novak Colwell, 2016).

Let's analyse this...

This case study illustrates the gendered nature of policy-making and implementation. The fishing ban, although ecologically justifiable, became an instrument of gender injustice in the situations where women bore the primary burden of providing for the household. In this context, the exclusion of women from relief schemes added an additional dimension of discrimination to an already unfair situation. The Puducherry Government, by including women in its fisheries relief scheme, therefore had a more rational and coherent policy for fishing ban relief. This is in line with the SSF Guidelines recommendation of **Para 10.1**. This case also calls for the application of **Para 10.4**, which urges States to ensure that fisheries policies for sustainable small-scale fisheries are aligned with the key objectives of the SSF Guidelines, including food security and the eradication of poverty.

Action points for policy-makers

1. Incorporate gender mainstreaming into all policy measures, including social security and relief policies for the small-scale fisheries sector.
2. Ensure that officials in the fisheries sector dealing with small-scale fishing communities are well-trained on concepts and practices related to gender mainstreaming.

Action points for CSOs

1. Incorporate gender mainstreaming into all education and training programmes within fishing communities.
2. Demand equal representation and rights for women in all government and aid agency programmes and policy interventions.

Policy coherence and ecological sustainability

Focusing only on economic growth can have long-term negative impacts on environmental sustainability. The consequent impacts on the small-scale fisheries sector, especially on women and children, can be particularly harsh. States and various policy organizations are therefore advised in the SSF Guidelines to strive for policy coherence in ways that safeguard vulnerable and marginalized groups (Para 10.1).

Policy coherence is also required of donor agencies so that, as the scenario in [Case study 23](#) illustrates, donor aid does not increase existing vulnerabilities within communities.

Case study 23: Marshall Point, a coastal indigenous fishing/farming community in Nicaragua

Marshall Point is a coastal community of indigenous people of African descent in the Pearl Lagoon basin of Nicaragua. Traditionally, the community engaged in both agriculture and fishing. Men tilled the land and grew rice, while women fished on the lagoon for fish and shrimp, using hooks, lines and harpoons. The community was self-sufficient for food, and had surplus rice to sell.

Then in the 1970s, commercial fishing for lobster and turtle was introduced in Marshall Point. In the late 1980s, fishing gear like gill nets was introduced through government and development aid. As a result, the community abandoned agriculture, and shifted to fishing for trade. It became a net importer of food, including rice. Overfishing resulted in declining fish returns, and by the end of the 1990s, community livelihood sustenance was under threat. Thereafter, two sets of interventions by foreign aid agencies, both of which lacked a participatory design, drew limited community response.

The community then decided to adopt its own strategy of rehabilitation. Its strategy focused on securing community rights to the land and to aquatic resources; setting up a fisheries cooperative; and shifting livelihoods from fisheries back to agriculture (González, 2011).

Let's analyse this...

This case study brings out clearly the need for States to harmonize “policies affecting the health of marine and inland ecosystems, to ensure fisheries, agriculture and other natural resources policies collectively enhance interrelated livelihoods” (Para 10.3). Aid agencies and bilateral/multilateral cooperation programmes too must ensure such harmonization in their approach to development aid. The study also emphasizes the need to follow an ecosystem approach focused on vulnerable and marginalized groups within fishing communities (Para 10.4).

Action points for policy-makers

1. Prior to programme and policy interventions, use impact analyses to understand the potential impact of economic intervention on existing small-scale fisheries ecosystems.
2. Where proposed programme interventions are donor- or externally driven, use participatory systems of planning, including both women and men from communities, to engage with traditional knowledge and practices, and to help community members understand potential impacts.

Action points for CSOs

1. Prior to any programme intervention, insist on the use of impact analyses by government and aid organizations.

In many instances, policy measures tend to be top-down. While community participation finds frequent mention in policy documents of both States and aid agencies, the implementation of robust participatory methods is in fact challenging and effort-intensive. Therefore, government as well as donor aid programmes often end up being designed without community participation, and remain informed largely by the advice of external experts. This can lead to situations where the “cure” suggested could serve to perpetuate and even exacerbate the problem. The challenge before governments, therefore, is to be able to introduce and sustain genuine participatory processes, inclusive of the voices of women, in their community interventions. Restricted community participation in programmes also leads to the further marginalization of women and other vulnerable groups in aid and relief interventions. Networks and platforms of women’s organizations within the small-scale fisheries sector can play an important role in this regard in representing the interests of women in the sector (see [Box 14](#)).

Box 14: Examples of women's networks in the small-scale fisheries sector

Networks of women in the small-scale fisheries play an important role in expanding the understanding of issues of women in the sector; advocacy for rights of women fishers to be included in global instruments and policies; capacity building and campaign. Some examples of networks in the sector include the network of women's organisations in fisheries and aquaculture in Europe: AKTEA; the Women in Fisheries (WIF) programme of the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF); the Latin American Network of Women working in the fisheries sector (NETWIF); and women associated with, and working through, Confédération Africaine des Organisations Professionnelles de la Pêche Artisanale (CAOPA), that is, the African Confederation of Artisanal Fisheries Professional Organisations. In addition to producer organizations, there are also a number of other related gender-focused networks. These include for example the informal Asian Fisheries Society group on gender in fisheries and aquaculture. This group supports a dedicated website, www.Genderaquafish.org, as global information exchange platform on gender in aquaculture and fisheries. The Too Big To Ignore research partnership on small-scale fisheries has a dedicated cluster on women and gender which aims at contributing to the implementation process of the SSF Guidelines. In the Caribbean, the University of the West Indies has joined forces with partners to conduct applied interdisciplinary research and outreach through a Gender in Fisheries Team. This initiative has the main objective to facilitate and support the implementation of the SSF Guidelines member states of the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism. Finally, Yemaya is the gender and fisheries newsletter published regularly by the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF).

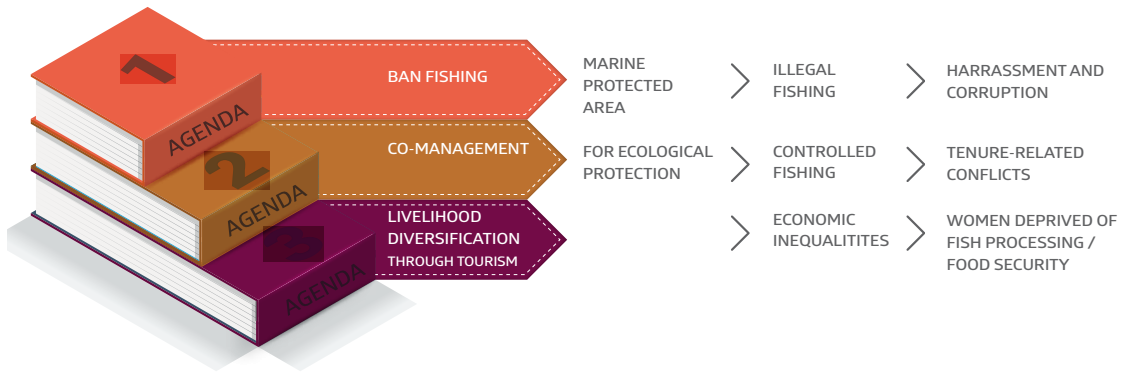
Sustainable implementation of policy coherence for gender equity

Policy coherence, as we have seen, involves balancing a triad of objectives: economic growth, environmental sustainability and social justice (including gender equity). Each of the three dimensions is important, particularly in the context of developing countries, where small-scale fisheries are concentrated. However, it may be argued that safeguarding environmental sustainability would be of central importance in policy coherence efforts since it is primarily the health and availability of natural resources that define the limits of both economic growth as well as gender-equitable social justice. Further, the clear and present danger of climate change, a central concern in the SSF Guidelines (see [Chapter 7: Disaster risks and climate change](#)), brings added urgency to the need for sustainable resource management and development.

Environmental sustainability alone, however, does not guarantee economic growth and social justice. [Figure 6](#) illustrates this scenario, using marine protection as an example of a desired environmental goal. If the goal of marine protection is approached through a ban on fishing (Agenda 1), it might lead to certain unintended outcomes, such as a rise in illegal fishing and petty corruption. If approached through co-management measures (Agenda 2), it may lead to regulated fishing but also clear the path for tenure-related conflicts with other stakeholders. If the approach adopted is

livelihood diversification by opening up the area to tourism (Agenda 3), income inequalities might be heightened, with women paying a disproportionate price in livelihood loss and heightened food insecurity. These concerns are manifest in the SSF Guidelines recommendations to States for policy coherence, especially in regard to spatial planning approaches.

Figure 5: Different outcomes from different policy agendas for the same goal



Para 10.2 enjoins States to develop marine and inland spatial planning approaches, including integrated coastal zone management planning, with due emphasis on the interests of small-scale fishing communities and (through “gender-sensitive policies and law”) the interests of women in particular.

The challenges in spatial planning are compellingly illustrated in India’s experience of implementing a regulatory framework to govern the country’s coastal zones. Soon after the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification was introduced by the Indian Government in 1991, pressure from non-SSF actors, such as the tourism and construction industries, resulted in the progressive dilution of critical provisions in the notification, which aimed to restrict the use of coastal areas for purposes other than traditional fishing (Equations, 2011). Similarly, a fundamental critique of rights-based management systems introduced in industrialized countries for the narrowly defined objective of managing fish stocks is that they have led to the concentration of power in the hands of large corporations, and in many cases to the phasing out of small-scale fisheries (see the discussion on Transferability of tenure in [Chapter 3](#)).

In this context, States have a key role to play in introducing and implementing coherent policies, harmonized for sustainable, inclusive and gender-equitable growth. Sustainable growth can in some instances be an issue requiring the coordinated intervention of multiple governments. For instance, the waters of Lake Victoria are shared by Kenya, the United Republic of Tanzania, and Uganda. In 1994, the Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization (LVFO) was formed through a convention between the three countries, in order to manage lake resources. Beach Management Units (BMUs) were set up under the LVFO to co-manage fisheries on the lake. This is a positive example of how policy coherence can be managed across countries. However, the challenge remains in how to align objectives and functioning of the BMUs, and to ensure gender-just regulations within these organizations in the different countries.

Key recommendations: Policy coherence, institutional coordination and collaboration

For policy makers

Policy coherence

- › Commit to the creation of a framework for policy coherence in small-scale fisheries that harmonizes economic growth, gender-equitable social justice and environmental sustainability, while effectively addressing areas of intersectoral conflict and coordination.
- › Ensure that policies for small-scale fisheries are harmonized with international principles of sustainable development, human rights and gender rights.

Gender mainstreaming

- › Incorporate gender mainstreaming in all policy measures, including social security and relief policies, for the small-scale fisheries sector.
- › Ensure that officials in the fisheries sector dealing with small-scale fishing communities are well-trained on concepts and practices related to gender mainstreaming.

Capacity development

- › Promote and extend policy support for the formation of organizations, such as cooperatives, among women fishers.
- › Ensure policy support for access to credit and infrastructure facilities in post-harvest processing and trade, through representative organizations for women (where possible).

Economic growth

- › Ensure that policies on economic growth, industry and trade in the fisheries sector take full account of the impact on women's livelihoods and household food security.
- › Take steps to ensure that women's livelihoods in small-scale fisheries are duly protected during the implementation of seasonal bans, no-take periods and other measures put in place for environmental protection.

Development policies

- › Ensure that development policies targeting small-scale fishing communities are discussed with community members, particularly women, before their implementation.
- › Ensure that all decisions related to spatial planning and coastal zone management are taken in consultation with women in inland and marine fishing communities.

Monitoring systems

- › Set up systems in collaboration with women fishers'/civil society organizations to undertake periodic impact analysis of major fisheries-related policies on the small-scale fisheries sector, with special reference to women. The analysis should study, inter alia, the impacts on livelihood, migration, food security and status of children in fishing communities.

- › Set up bilateral and regional fisheries cooperation bodies to ensure policies of neighbouring States are harmonized for sustainable use of common fishery resources, with special emphasis on food security and sustainable livelihood of women in small-scale fishing communities.

Key recommendations

For CSOs

- › In collaboration with women in fishing communities, identify areas of intersectoral policy conflict between small-scale fisheries and other sectors that adversely affect women's livelihood.
- › In collaboration with women in fishing communities, bring areas of intersectoral policy conflict to the attention of policy-makers, and push for gender-equitable policy harmonization.
- › Set up networks of organizations of women, from small-scale fisheries sectors and other professional organizations, to facilitate the exchange of information and experiences, coordinate demands, and work with State organizations in order to develop fisheries policies that safeguard the rights and interests of women and their families.



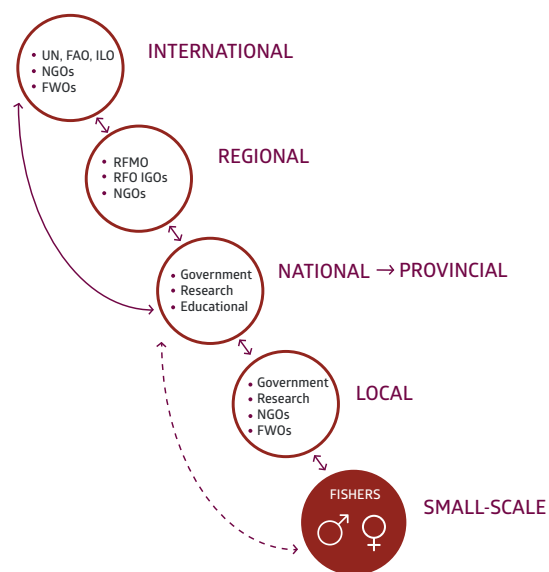


9. Information, research and communication

Properly recognizing and appraising women's roles, work, and contribution to small-scale fisheries, food security and poverty eradication, as well as to local, regional and national economies, are information priorities in the small-scale fisheries sector today. Across regions, these contributions have been consistently overlooked or underestimated in the more general context of the neglect of the small-scale fisheries sector, putting women at a serious, double disadvantage.

In most countries, available data on employment, income and value of fish production are grossly inadequate as indicators of the real numbers of people whose livelihood depends on fish, or the real contribution of fisheries to the local and national economy (Béné, Macfadyen and Allison, 2007). As a result, the sector itself is largely ignored by national policy and international development initiatives. The lack of knowledge about small-scale fisheries prevents the sector from receiving sufficient resources to generate the information required to demonstrate its importance (FAO, 2015b). This vicious cycle is even harsher for women, who typically occupy secondary positions within fishing communities (see [Figure 6](#)). Consequently, the invisibility of women's roles is further institutionalized.

Figure 6: Existing, top-down knowledge production and dissemination processes



Source: Based on FAO (2009b).

This schematic diagram depicts the general flow of information and knowledge in the small-scale fisheries sector in most countries. The direction and strength of the arrows in the diagram depict the way information flows, with interactive processes of information sharing and decision-making limited only to the top three levels of international-regional-national agencies in the knowledge hierarchy. The local organizations are generally reduced to tools for information delivery, while fishing communities are mere passive recipients of information. Women in communities, who occupy secondary positions, are even more marginalized from the schema of knowledge and information production and dissemination. Their priorities and needs find very little space in national policies for the sector. Their traditional knowledge, which is vital for the survival of the sector, gets devalued in national discourses on the fisheries sector.

In terms of information, research and communication, identified by the SSF Guidelines as key components of an enabling environment for the enhancement of responsible, sustainable and gender-equitable fisheries, there are three areas in which the invisibility of women's roles and its consequences need to be addressed:

- › the generation and documentation of relevant knowledge, which draws on the full participation of women;
- › analytical tools to enable women to make gainful use of information and research, including understanding of the tools available to evaluate projects and programmes in terms of gender effectiveness and practical use;
- › appropriate and effective communication systems that women can easily access.

As shown in [Figure 6](#), fishing communities, and in particular their women members, tend to be excluded from information gathering and research activities, and are marginalized in communication flows. In the absence of participatory processes involving fishing communities who are the main targets, these activities begin to lose relevance. As the scant data available on women's participation in the sector demonstrates, the information generated has little to do with ground-level needs. These informational "blind spots" are then reproduced and reflected in research priorities. Finally, since information and research outcomes are usually publicized through top-down and one-way communication systems that shut out feedback, these outcomes are rarely evaluated for usefulness and relevance.

The effective use of information, research and communication systems is critical for the successful implementation of the SSF Guidelines in terms of gender equity and equality. **Para 11.1** of the SSF Guidelines calls on States to establish systems to collect fisheries data relevant for decision-making, while **Para 11.2** requires all stakeholders and fishing communities to recognize the importance of communication and information for effective decision-making. In this context, it is essential to ensure that these systems have participatory processes focusing on women in fishing communities.

In a participatory system of information, information and research feed into each other. The communication of information and research outcomes with women should be through simple and transparent two-way processes. These would allow women to help determine research and information agendas, and give them a voice in deciding how these activities should be carried out.

The rest of this chapter focuses first on the gender-related information and research gaps, issues and priorities identified by the SSF Guidelines, and then on the communication processes, tools and strategies required for the gender-equitable implementation of the SSF Guidelines.

Information needs and priorities for gender-equitable small-scale fisheries

Those who have information also have power, and one of the crucial determinants of access to information is gender (FAO, 2009b). The SSF Guidelines identify several Information priorities in the context of gender. These can be classified under the following headings:

- › Collection, analysis and use of sex-disaggregated data in official statistics
- › Information for social development
- › Information for economic development and sustainable livelihoods
- › Integration of women's traditional knowledge

Collection, analyse and use of gender-disaggregated data in official statistics

The lack of sex-disaggregated data is one of the main barriers to the proper recognition and appraisal of women's roles and contributions in small-scale fisheries. The informal nature of women's work in the sector makes data collection and documentation a challenge. As a result, gender stereotypes of

fisheries as a male domain, together with the policy neglect of gender issues, are further perpetuated (Lentisco and Lee, 2015).

Access to sex-disaggregated data would help to focus policy attention on priority needs of women in the sector, and encourage women's participation in decision-making. In addition, the systematic tracking, evaluation and monitoring of parameters linked to gender equity and equality in fishing communities would be made possible.

Priority areas for the collection of sex-disaggregated data include:

- › activities performed across the entire value chain, whether pre-harvest, harvest or post-harvest work; part-time, occasional, subsistence-based or full-time; both paid and unpaid; and performed by both women and men;
- › all activities that contribute to food security, poverty eradication, and other forms of social security;
- › status of children, including educational level, health status, and other social and demographic indices.

Information for social development

Fishing communities face many types of deprivation related to such human needs as adequate nutrition, health, education, social security, dignity and decent work (Béné, Macfadyen and Allison, 2007). As discussed in Chapter 4 ([Social development, employment and decent work](#)), the experience of deprivation is even more heightened when such communities are located in remote and poorly serviced rural areas. Where basic services are available, women's access may be constrained due to many reasons, such as lack of mobility, lack of free time, and low levels of literacy. In such contexts, relevant, timely and accessible information can help to reduce the overall vulnerability and lack of power that women experience.

Priority information areas for addressing social development needs include:

- › health, particularly women's reproductive and occupational health issues; health-related rights and entitlements; access to affordable and accessible health care; access to health insurance and subsidies; and health care information and services for children and the aged;
- › education, including accessible and affordable schools; educational subsidies and scholarships; adult education and literacy; digital and computer literacy; and other education-related rights and entitlements;
- › provisioning of basic services such as food, water, sanitation, transport, electricity, fuel and other sources of energy;
- › social security and related access issues, rights and entitlements;
- › violence against women, including domestic violence, rape, and workplace sexual harassment.

Information for economic development and sustainable livelihoods

Women in the small-scale fisheries sector usually lack information vital to increasing their efficiency at work. The lack of information on the fish value chain (in terms of the "big picture"), market and

trade, and credit sources restricts their incomes and growth. This forces them to be dependent on intermediaries, who end up taking the lion's share of value addition (see [Box 15](#)).

Box 15: Women's clam-fishing value chain in Tunisia

About 4 000 women (officially registered/having a fishing licence) are involved in the fishing of clams in Southern Tunisia, in the Gulf of Gabes, the major clam-producing area in Tunisia. Italy and Spain are the main importing countries of these "luxury" products, and they absorb more than 90 percent of the national production. The domestic demand for clams rarely exceeds 2 percent of the landings.

The women work under precarious conditions, spending more than five hours a day in seawater, to earn only a meagre return from their activities. They sell their catch for less than US\$3 per kg to intermediaries; the clams are sold for seven to ten times this price on the European market. A value chain analysis conducted in 2016 by FAO confirmed the economics. It further revealed critical shortcomings in terms of participation, transparency, equity, human dignity, empowerment and rule of law. The involvement of a multitude of intermediaries and their service fees further reduces the earnings of the women fishers. The intermediaries act as financiers to the women fishers, as well as service providers in their fishing activities. Consequently the women fishers earn around US\$45 per month, equivalent to 70 percent of the national legal wage in the agriculture sector, while the intermediaries earn around thrice this amount from the transactions.

The value chain analysis was useful in clearly identifying the areas where critical intervention was required. An autonomous association of women, the Association Feminine pour la pêche des palourdes et le Développement (AFPD), was created to strengthen their bargaining power and advocate for their interests and rights. Since early 2016, the AFPD has been advocating for significant changes to help women clam fishers, and serves as an entry point for other groups along the Tunisian coast. The FAO programme is also promoting dialogue with the central and local governments to ensure transparency and social justice in the clam fisheries. It seeks to replace the non-transparent and exploitative system of intermediaries with empowered organizations of women clam fishers.

Source: Y. Diei-Ouadi, personal communication, 2017.

In the present context of changing work practices, globalized trade, changing weather patterns and increased climate-related concerns, women need to be able to educate themselves periodically in order to cope with these changes.

Priority areas for information access include:

- › understanding the activities of value chains of fish and other aquatic products in which women participate;
- › market and trade information along the value chain, including the identification of existing marketing bottlenecks and gaps in marketing mixes (product, price, promotion, replacement, trade) and the development of value-added products (FAO, 2015b);

- > certification and fair trade schemes, particularly those that prioritize women's work (FAO, 2015b);
- > understanding the banking system, including systems for credit, loans and microfinance in the public and non-government sectors, where women can access affordable credit;
- > access to information related to sustainable livelihoods including food security, climate change impacts, and disaster preparedness;
- > information on illegal activities throughout the value chain, which can help women to collectively monitor and safeguard their work.

Having data and being in possession of the facts can help hold decision-makers accountable, force transparency in the governance of fisheries, and facilitate better participation from community members in decision-making and management. [Case study 24](#) illustrates this through the example of women crab collectors in the Sunderbans forests in eastern India who, in the process of organizing against the arbitrary confiscation of their boats and gear by local authorities, also became part of strategies against illegal activities in the value chain.

Case study 24: Women fishers fight corruption in the Sunderbans, India

Women in the Sunderbans in India use wooden boats to fish for crabs. This is a traditional livelihood activity, which the communities have engaged in for generations. However, women are not recognized as traditional small-scale fishers with fishing rights. Further, boats require a Boat License Certificate (BLC) in order to fish in the Sunderbans. The BLC is non-transferable, and because there is no fresh issue of BLCs, there is a thriving black market for the certificates. As a result of these circumstances, women often have their boats confiscated. It takes them two to three months to earn the amount needed to pay the required fine and free their boats.

On 14 February 2015, 50 women belonging to the Kotalali Women Canoe Fishers Association confronted the Forest Department to protest against the confiscation of their boats. The actions were defended on the grounds of alleged poaching in the area. The women argued that they should not be all penalized for the action of a few unknown individuals. They agreed to inform the Forest Department of any poaching in the area. The Department in turn agreed to not seize canoes for three months, while they tracked and regulated the movements of the boats of the villagers (Sarkar, 2015). It was the first time these women ever had a public interaction of this kind with State authorities.

Let's analyse this...

This case study highlights the role of States in ensuring that their representatives are transparent in their actions and accountable in the decision-making processes they follow (**Para 11.3**). It also indicates how small-scale fishers can support measures to regulate and prevent illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing (**Para 11.5**). The issues of the boat licence and the exclusion of women from legal fishing highlight how policy measures can be gender-blind and therefore unjust. **Para 11.1** of the SSF Guidelines, which calls for the gender disaggregation of official data and for gender-responsive policy-making, is of particular relevance to this case.

Action points for policy-makers

1. Promote the use of participatory forums to discuss irregularities with fishing communities before taking any punitive action.
2. Train government officers to be particularly considerate where the livelihood of women fishers is concerned, as women are usually the primary caregivers in their homes and communities.

Action points for CSOs

1. Support capacity development among women to build leadership and representation skills, and help women to take up issues in various government and institutional forums.

Integration of women's traditional knowledge

Women's role in ensuring the sustainability of small-scale fisheries, in particular in sustaining food security in traditional communities, is firmly recognized in the SSF Guidelines. The Guidelines consider this knowledge to be vital for both the participatory co-management of fishery resources and the sustainable governance of traditional fishing activities. At the same time, the SSF Guidelines also recognize that women in indigenous and subsistence communities require support to improve and upgrade their knowledge, particularly that of aquatic ecosystems (**Para 11.7**). Women's traditional knowledge is vital to:

- › understanding local food security, including subsistence fishing practices and species that contribute to community food needs (see [Box 16](#))
- › understanding local traditions of cooperation and participatory governance practiced by women in fishing communities;
- › understanding environmental impacts, including the impact of climate change on local aquatic ecosystems.

Box 16: Identifying invertebrate species in the Niue

In November 2000, the Community Fisheries Section of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community conducted field studies with the help of women fishers to identify and document important marine invertebrate species in the region. Many past studies in the region had failed to paint a clear picture of local species and their uses. However, a two-week field study in collaboration with the women fishers of Niue helped identify and record 92 Niuean invertebrate species. Of these, 29 were used for food locally, while around ten were used for shell craft. The traditional knowledge of the women fishers was critical in gathering this valuable information.

Source: Lambeth, 2001.

Research needs and priorities for gender-equitable small-scale fisheries

Research plays an important role, not just in informing policy, but in empowerment, advocacy and mobilization of resources (Béné, Macfadyen and Allison, 2007). In keeping with this, the SSF Guidelines highlight certain important gender-related priorities for research in small-scale fisheries:

- › First, the research should include all factors related to the status of women and their work, such as the conditions of women in the sector, including health status, food security, education of children, and role of women in decision-making within communities. The research should also include the work of women in different contexts along the fish value chain.
- › Second, the research should emphasize gender in fisheries and support gender mainstreaming. In particular, it should help structure gender analysis using gender-sensitive indicators to monitor status and change for women in fishing communities.
- › Third, research processes should be participatory, focusing on the priorities of the fishing communities, and helping build the capacity of women to participate in research and use research findings.

It is important to note here that the small-scale fisheries sector displays considerable regional diversity in terms of social customs and norms on the one hand, and work practices on the other. Consequently, research priorities and processes should be able to fit these diverse requirements, and cannot therefore be prescribed. The diversity of requirements underscores and highlights the need for a participatory approach to research (Béné, Macfadyen and Allison, 2007).

The research priorities for the small-scale fisheries sector are categorized under the following subject headings:

- › The status of women in the context of changing small-scale fishing societies
- › Women's roles and contributions along the fish value chain
- › Women's roles in sustainable fisheries management

Box 17: Gender-sensitive measures and indicators

Gender-sensitive indicators are a measure of the status of women in a given society, and help to understand how, and for what possible reasons, this changes over time. For women in small-scale fisheries, examples of gender-sensitive indicators include those related to:

- › Work: for example, women's wages and the gender gap in wages, and the extent of women's migration for work;
- › Domestic conditions: for example, children's education and domestic violence;
- › Women's status in the community: for example, their positions in the community's leadership hierarchy, including positions in joint fisheries management projects;
- › Larger societal trends, such as participation in political processes.

The status of women in the context of changing small-scale fishing societies

Globally, the small-scale fisheries sector has been undergoing far-reaching changes, which are having a profound impact on women in the sector. These changes are due to a number of factors, including economic factors such as increasing competition, and environmental factors such as climate change. They include the following:

- › migration in search of work and livelihood – sometimes of men, sometimes of women, and sometimes of both;
- › changes in the roles of women within communities, in terms of their work and responsibilities;
- › changes in women's needs and requirements, in terms of social and economic security, and the ability to contribute to the sustenance of their families.

Research therefore must be able to accurately capture, reflect and enhance the understanding of these changing aspects of women's lives, through both qualitative insights and statistical analyses. Such research can feed into relevant policy for the sector, including appropriate support for women and opportunities for livelihood diversification.

Priority areas for research include:

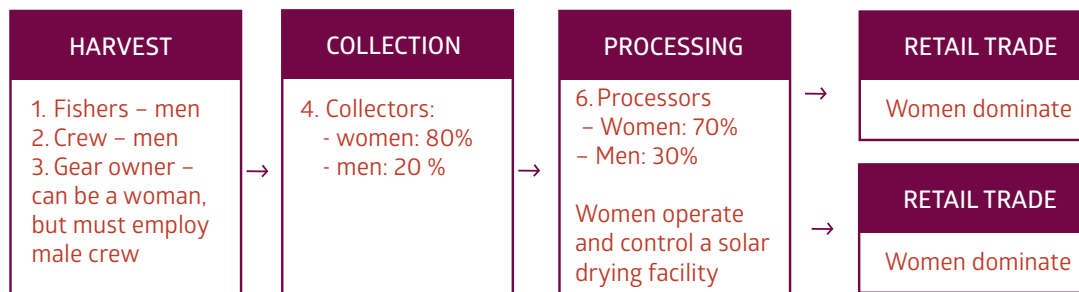
- › the impact of climate and environment on fishing communities, including their women members;
- › understanding the changes taking place in the fishing environment, particularly in intertidal and nearshore fish ecosystems;
- › the impact of competition on women's work and gender-related vulnerabilities;
- › trends in employment and earnings for women, including migration for work;
- › changing conditions of fishing families, including their children;
- › the impact of policy and of specific development project interventions on the status of women in the sector, using gender-sensitive measures.

Women's roles and contributions along the fish value chain

Research on the role of women along the value chain is necessary in order to make their contributions visible and to understand what kind of support they need. The integration of the small-scale fisheries sector with industrial fishing through modernization and trade significantly affects women's traditional roles along the value chain, particularly in post-harvest work. Proper analysis of women's economic roles would allow women to participate in the value chain on better and more equitable terms. Value chain analysis (VCA) is an important research tool being increasingly used in the sector, as illustrated in [Case study 25](#).

Case study 25: An example of value chain analysis (VCA)

The figure below¹⁷ illustrates an example of women's participation in fish value chains in Malawi.



In this simple representation, fish harvesting is done by male fishers and crew members, with women family members helping in unpaid pre-harvest activities. The fish catch is taken to collection centres, after setting aside a part of the catch for crew and family members. The only economic transactions at the harvest stage are wages for workers and boat costs (repair/rent). In the collection centres, fish is purchased by women processors and women and men processors/traders. The activities at the centres are facilitated by women collection facilitators, who are paid a daily wage for their role. The fish is processed (sun-dried; parboiled and sun-dried; fried and sun-dried) primarily by women. There is no economic transaction attached to processing, except the cost of minor inputs such as salt, cooking fuel and oil. The processed fish is taken to be sold directly to customers, to other retailers, or to wholesalers. There may be transportation costs for carrying fish to retail centres on buses and other forms of transport¹⁸.

Normally, a VCA captures only economic activities. However, the VCA can also be designed to capture unpaid activities at various stages, the time taken for these activities, and even to impute a notional cost to be paid to different actors for unpaid activities. It can be used to analyse differences between the roles of women and men in cases (such as in trading or processing/trading) where both are engaged, or to understand the relative investments and profits made by these actors. The VCA can also be designed to understand governance structures at each stage of the process.

The analysis can therefore generate data that can be useful for government agencies to regulate fish collection and trading centres in order to ensure better gender parity. The bottlenecks in terms of investment requirements and credit access can also be examined through this process.

Let's analyse this....

The SSF Guidelines call upon States and other relevant parties to mainstream gender into research programmes, particularly through the use of gender analysis and gender-sensitive indicators (**Para 11.10**). Value chain analysis can be used as a gender-sensitive methodological framework to yield specific data related to women's activities and the issues they face along the value chain.

¹⁷ Based on Pasani, Hara and Chimatiro (2016). needs related to the implementation of the

¹⁸ Ibid.

Action points for policy-makers

1. Use research methods like value chain analysis to gather data and information on women's roles.
2. Focus attention on specific problems of women along the value chain, and identify policy measures to address their issues.

Action points for CSOs

1. Undertake participatory exercises with women in fishing communities to help them understand their roles along the value chain, their contribution to fish value addition, and to articulate the specific areas in which they need capacity support.

Women's roles in sustainable fisheries management

The role of women of fishing communities in sustainable resource management is critical. Women's traditional knowledge of intertidal zones, nearshore species and aquatic ecosystems are critical to the design of sustainable fisheries projects for the small-scale fisheries sector. Women also play critical leadership roles in building community organizations. Indeed, many successful sustainable resource management projects have had women in critical roles. Gender-sensitive analyses of these projects are therefore important in order to critically examine successes and failures and carry forward important management lessons. Analyses of these successful examples are also important in order to adapt these experiences to other regional contexts, and to get policy support for these projects. In this context, research plays a very important role in giving direction and support to the spread of gender-equitable sustainable resource management programmes.

Communication needs and priorities for gender-equitable small-scale fisheries

In addition to more relevant and appropriate information and research, there is a need to improve the flow of gender-related information in the small-scale fisheries sector through improved communication strategies. As in the case of information and research strategies, local variations and regional diversities in the small-scale fisheries sector rule out any sort of prescriptive approach with respect to communication strategies. However, two broad themes may be identified:

- > Requirements for gender-responsive communication strategies
- > Means of gender-responsive communication

Requirements for gender-responsive communication strategies

A gender-responsive communication strategy would be premised on:

- > transparency – in terms of holding decision-makers accountable and ensuring impartial decisions are delivered promptly;
- > open and two-way processes of communication – in terms of communication flows that regard women as equal participants in communication dialogues, and not merely as passive recipients of information;
- > acceptance – in terms of allowing women to have responsibility for, a sense of ownership over, and hence an acceptance or buy-in of the communication;

- › accessibility – in terms of appropriate, affordable and accessible communication media and information that is relevant and easy to grasp.

Analysis of how information and communication needs change with progressively more complex tasks in fish value chains indicates that as the complexity of the task or the value chain increases, so does the complexity of technologies used (Mallalieu, 2015). Since women are primarily concentrated at the bottom of fish value chains, this suggests that the starting point of a communications strategy should not be technology-based – unless women do have access to that technology. Addressing basic needs and functional gaps, such as low levels of functional literacy, should be the priority. Since technology is not a panacea but a mere vehicle for communication, this also suggests that communication strategies that rely on artificially created technological fixes rather than genuine needs are unlikely to be effective. Governments and donors, however, have unfortunately tended to support information delivery through technology-based solutions rather than by addressing basic needs and contextual barriers (FAO, 2009b).

The basic barriers that should be addressed while designing efficient gender-responsive modes of communication include:

- › low levels of literacy and education, including functional literacy and basic computer literacy;
- › language barriers, if the language of communication is not the local dialect or language spoken;
- › poor communication infrastructure, such as poor electricity supply and bandwidth;
- › lack of access to technology, including lack of affordable technology services.

Means of gender-responsive communication

Face-to-face communication can develop trust, allow for clarification of doubts and misunderstandings, and help in developing shared understanding of situations. The case study on the women fishers' interaction with forest department officials in the Sunderbans in India ([Case study 24](#)) is a good example of the efficiency of face-to-face communication strategies. Another effective mode of the two-way form of communication endorsed by the SSF Guidelines ([Para 11.4](#)) is holding public meetings that bring stakeholders together for debate and discussion. Equally effective are public hearings that bring together women fishers and State officials; these can be useful to air grievances and suggest ways to move forward using participatory approaches. The resolutions passed in such forums are more likely to be accepted by all parties.

[Case study 26](#) shows how a successful participatory process can be initiated using such simple and robust communication processes.

Case study 26: Public hearing on issues of women in the fish trade in Kerala, India

In 2015, the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in Kerala, India, undertook a detailed study of women in the fish trade in the state. The study revealed considerable changes in the sector in the past 6–7 years. This had bearing not only on the work of the women, but also on the quality of fish being sold. The findings were discussed with the women at a meeting in February 2015. One major problem highlighted was growing male domination in fish vending. Another problem was that women only had access to poor quality frozen fish from harbours. This was because traditional beach-based fishing had been completely replaced by harbour fishing as the source of fresh fish in local communities. It was decided to take the issues brought up by the study to a public hearing.

The hearing was held in December 2015 at Trivandrum, the state capital. The jury members included a retired High Court Judge who was Chairman of the Fisheries Debt Relief Commission, the State Commissioner of Food Safety, the Additional Director of Fisheries, the Managing Director of the state fisheries cooperative federation (Matsyafed), a senior scientist, and a social activist. Important recommendations of the jury included the following: the Department of Food Safety should train women fishers in quality checking along the supply chain; there should be branding of high quality fish and sales from exclusive “women-only markets” run by the women fish vendors; and the government-run bus services for women to access landing sites for fish should be extended to new areas. The jury also highlighted the need for more comprehensive data regarding women working in different aspects of fishing (Nayak, 2016).

Let's analyse this...

This case study highlights how two-way information sharing can empower fishing communities (Para 11.4). It emphasizes that research into conditions of work, health and gender relations is important in order to inform strategies for equitable benefits for women and men (Para 11.10). The jury recommendation on quality awareness also indicates the need to educate consumer and producer communities on fish quality (Para 11.11).

Action points for policy-makers


1. Use two-way and open communication forums with women in fishing communities to discuss their problems, and to develop proposals for addressing these problems.
2. Address issues like quality and consumer awareness to help women to move towards better practices and greater value addition in their work.

Action points for CSOs

1. Build representation and leadership capacity among women in fishing and indigenous communities to enable them to present their issues in public engagements.

Certain simple, technology-enabled solutions can facilitate routine communication and robust communication strategies. The spread of mobile telephony boosting the use of social media in many parts of the world is one such example. The development by the Kenya Marine Fisheries Research Institute of a fish market information network for Omena fish (*Rastrineobola argentea*), based on mobile telephony targeting villages around Lake Victoria in Kenya (Dey de Pryck, 2013), is a good example of a communication strategy that successfully addresses an urgent need of women fishers.

Communication strategies that target women and men separately can also be helpful in addressing common disasters and risks. For instance, in Cuba, a gender-differentiated strategy focused on women's lack of knowledge on earthquake preparedness. A programme targeting women in the 18–40 age group disseminated appropriate information using posters, leaflets, radio spots and T-shirts. Of those targeted, 78 percent reported positive impacts from the communication strategy (GDN, 2009). In the context of disaster warnings, no particular medium – be it television, SMS, internet and social media, or amateur radio and community radio – can be prescribed as completely effective;



rather, the appropriateness of each channel depends on the environment where it is to be applied (Wattegama, 2007).

There is a need to promote better information flows between fishing communities using exchange programmes, virtual meetings and the social networking facilities available via the internet – modes of communication that have proven to be extremely effective for sharing experiences in managing resources through community-based initiatives (FAO, 2009b).

Through collective and coordinated action, groups of women fishworkers can serve to bridge the information and knowledge sharing gaps that exist between women in fishing communities and outside organizations, including government bodies. Such action is vital for the development of leadership among women in fishing communities. Further, when groups join together to form networks in local, national and regional contexts, these often play a powerful pressure group role to improve visibility for women in fishing communities, bring their issues to public light, and help in influencing policy and funding priorities.

Key recommendations: Information, research and communication

For policy makers

Gender-disaggregated information

- Promote policies and research to support the gathering of gender-disaggregated data in official statistics on all aspects of small-scale fisheries, with particular emphasis on:
 - all fish value chain activities, whether pre-harvest, harvest or post-harvest work; part-time, occasional, subsistence-based or full-time; both paid and unpaid; and performed by both women and men;
 - all activities that contribute to food security, poverty eradication and other forms of social security;
 - status of children, including educational level, health status and other social and demographic indices.

Information on basic needs and services

- Collect sex-sensitive and sex-disaggregated data on both the availability of and access to basic needs, essential services and social security pertaining to women in the small-scale fisheries sector.

Violence against women

- Conduct research to generate information on the extent and nature of violence against women in fishing communities in both domestic and public spaces.

Markets, finance and trade

- Conduct research and generate information on value chains of fish and other aquatic products in which women participate.
- Conduct research and generate information pertaining to markets and trade, including existing marketing bottlenecks, gaps in marketing mixes, and developing value-added products.
- Conduct research and generate information on certification and fair trade schemes, particularly those that prioritize women's work.
- Conduct research and generate information on systems for affordable and accessible credit, loans and microfinance in the public and non-government sectors.

Sustainable livelihoods

- Establish intergovernmental systems for information and research covering exploitation of common fisheries resources, with specific emphasis on food security and livelihood of women in small-scale fishing communities.
- Conduct research on sustainable and participatory resource management systems.
- Conduct research and generate information to help women in fishing communities understand the impact of climate change on local aquatic ecosystems.

Disaster preparedness

- › Generate information and spread awareness on various forms of disaster preparedness, targeting in particular women and children in fishing communities.
- › Traditional knowledge - Facilitate women of fishing communities in documenting and publicizing their local traditional knowledge.
- › Facilitate women of fishing communities in documenting and publicizing local traditions of cooperation and participatory governance.

Research policies

- › Formulate research policy to emphasize gender in fisheries and to support gender mainstreaming.
- › Support participatory research that draws on the priorities of the fishing communities and allows women in these communities to fully participate in the research process.

Communication needs

- › Promote two-way communication in the interaction of government agencies with small-scale fishing communities, in order to ensure transparency, agree on regulations and resolve disputes. Ensure that women are included fully in the communication process.
- › Set up simple but robust communication systems to deal with concerns of the small-scale fisheries sector with regard to disaster risks, climate change, illegal fishing and other immediate concerns that threaten their livelihood and food security. Ensure that systems are simple enough for women and disadvantaged sections of communities to use them independently.
- › Address basic barriers that obstruct gender-responsive modes of communication, including low levels of literacy and education, language barriers, poor infrastructure, and lack of access to basic technology.
- › Where needed, adopt simple technology-enabled solutions to facilitate routine communication, such as market- and trade-related information.
- › Use gender-differentiated communication strategies, where appropriate, to spread awareness on disaster preparedness and risk.

Key recommendations for CSOs

- › In collaboration with women in fishing communities, identify key gender-related information and research gaps and priorities.
- › Document and periodically update the availability and status of basic services in communities.
- › In collaboration with women in fishing communities, periodically carry out social surveys to understand the status and needs of community members, particularly women, in terms of social and economic parameters.
- › In collaboration with women in fishing communities, conduct gender analysis and generate information to promote understanding of the fish value chains that employ women.
- › Promote analytic and participatory research skills among women in fishing communities.
- › Help women in fishing communities better understand markets, finance and trade.
- › Help women in fishing communities better understand climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- › Promote education among women in fishing communities through adult education, children's education, functional literacy, and digital and computer literacy.
- › Work with women in fishing communities to establish women's organizations, including cooperatives, to communicate on common issues and find common solutions.
- › Promote simple and robust communication forms such as meetings, workshops, public tribunals and women's mock courts among women in fishing communities. Where needed, help women access simple, technology-enabled solutions for greater efficiency.





10. Capacity development

Women in small-scale fisheries are largely under-represented in leadership roles, decision-making positions and policy bodies. This is due to many reasons, including cultural norms that restrict women's engagement in public forums, and social norms that charge women with the primary responsibility for domestic work, thus limiting their ability to participate in public life.

Capacity development refers to a process by which certain abilities are enhanced, including the ability to set and achieve objectives, perform functions, solve problems, and also to develop the means and conditions required to enable this process (FAO, 2004a). This definition indicates that certain means and conditions are needed in order to enable the process of capacity development. It is important to identify what these might be for women in the small-scale fisheries sector.

Developing the capacity of women

Women in the context of the small-scale fisheries sector in developing countries often have little control over the means of production (e.g. secure access to fish processing facilities and fish markets). They are constrained by lack of access to credit, savings and other forms of capital, and their priorities are often under-represented in State policy-making. On top of this, women are also constrained by the traditional roles they must perform within families and communities. The SSF Guidelines make explicit reference in various chapters to these constraints, and call upon States and other parties to address them so that women can share fully in the benefits of development and in the products of their own labour. **Para 12.2** of the Guidelines explicitly calls on States and other stakeholders to provide capacity building through development programmes. [Case study 13](#), on women fish vendors who took back control over a local fish market and developed it using their own autonomous organizations, is a good example of how the process of building capacity for women to expand opportunities can be both a prerequisite and a process for their individual and collective capacity development. Several other cases in this handbook discuss such interventions for developing women's capacities: for instance, increasing efficiency and reducing drudgery associated with fish processing through better technology; and better access to market information through phone-based applications.

Enabling women's participation in decision-making

Building capacity to enhance women's participation in decision-making is not only a matter of training and skills development. An enabling environment is needed, and certain structural conditions must be met, to allow women the space and time for capacity development. Otherwise, women can end up being saddled with increased responsibilities on top of their existing roles in the domestic and employment spheres, as demonstrated in [Case study 27](#).

Case study 27: Enabling women's participation in meetings in Kigombe, the United Republic of Tanzania

The Tanga Coastal Zone Conservation and Development Programme in the northern part of the United Republic of Tanzania was launched in July 1994. In the first phase (called the “listening” phase), priority issues were identified through participatory socio-economic and resource assessments and stakeholder workshops. In the second or “demonstration” phase, collaborative fisheries management plans were developed jointly by government agencies and local resource users. In Kigombe village, women initially did not attend meetings called to discuss village issues. A special meeting, held for women only, revealed that the women did not want to waste their time on meetings where they were certain men would not listen to them. Moreover, the timings of the meetings did not suit them and were not announced in advance.

A joint meeting was held with both men and women to discuss the problem. As a result of the meeting, the men came to appreciate the reasons why women's participation was necessary. They however blamed customs and tradition as responsible for women's non-participation, rather than their own unwillingness to listen, the poor timing of the meetings or the lack of advance notice. A discussion on these differing perceptions followed, after which the women decided that they would attend meetings and the men promised that they would listen to the women; in addition, the meetings would be held to suit women's schedules and would be announced in advance. Subsequently, women's attendance improved, they took seats in the village environmental committees, and they participated in the formulation of the fisheries management agreement (Ingen, Kawau and Wells, 2002).

Let's analyse this...

Para 12.1 calls upon States and other parties to enhance the capacity of small-scale fishing communities in order to enable them to participate in decision-making, with specific attention paid to the equitable participation of women. The Tanga project created space for capacity development among women by soliciting and acting upon feedback to remove significant barriers to women's participation. As a result, women were able to engage more fully in organizational affairs and participate actively in decision-making. This engagement is in line with the two-way process of knowledge transfer recommended by the SSF Guidelines in **Para 12.3**.

Action points for policy-makers

1. Understand and address the barriers to women's participation in programmes for community development. Address patriarchy in particular, both within the community and among the government officials interacting with the community.
2. Include gender-sensitive indicators to ensure improvement in women's participation in development interventions.

Action points for CSOs

1. Address the issue of gender mainstreaming within communities, through group work with women and men, and specific training for women.

[Case study 29](#) on the Regional Fisheries Livelihood Programme for South and Southeast Asia (RFLP) also highlights the risk that women’s participation in project activities may cause them to experience an increased personal work load, something which needs to be factored into project planning. In this context, the SSF Guidelines recommendation (**Para 12.1**) for separate spaces and mechanisms to “enable women to organise autonomously” is relevant and significant.

Supporting representative structures

The SSF Guidelines in **Para 12.1** call upon States and other parties to enable participation of fishing communities in decision-making processes through creation of representative structures. Further, **Para 12.4** of the Guidelines urges local government bodies to involve fishing communities directly in governance and in development processes. The next case study, [Case study 28](#), highlights how States can enable the representation of women’s organizations.

Case study 28: Fisherwomen in Brazil organize for their rights

Fisherwomen in Brazil have a long history of organizing. The process of movement building that had started in the 1970s advanced significantly after the government supported a series of national fisheries conferences in the mid-1990s, which gave fisherwomen the opportunity to meet and discuss their issues at state and national levels. This led to the formation of the National Articulation of Fisherwomen (ANP) in 2006 at the First National Meeting of Fisherwomen, held in Recife, Pernambuco.

The third meeting of the ANP was held in June 2012, with “Fishing with Health and Welfare” as its theme. This focused on three issues: fisherwomen’s health, the shortcomings of the health system, and the problems fisherwomen faced in accessing social security. It was decided that these issues would form the immediate focus of ANP’s mobilization efforts.

Over the next few years, a medical team, together with another organization, Conselho Pastoral dos Pescadores (CPP – “Pastoral Council of Fishworkers”) conducted epidemiological research in Bahia on the occupational diseases of shellfish collectors and the quality of treatment services available. A special primer on fisherwomen’s health was prepared. The ANP used this to conduct discussions with communities and to persuade medical teams from universities in other states to conduct similar research.

Thereafter, a meeting was held with the Health Ministry where ANP and CPP members, and doctors who had helped prepare the primer, made a presentation to Health Ministry officials on the salient health issues. Following this meeting, the Ministry agreed to undertake an extensive epidemiological study research across 11 states, based on the Bahia study. The Ministry also agreed to introduce health-related content for fishers into professional health courses (Pierri, 2013).

Let’s analyse this...

Para 12.1 of the SSF Guidelines urges States and other parties to enhance the capacity of small-scale fishers and their organizations to participate fully in decision-making processes. It also urges that support be given to enable women to organize autonomously at various levels on issues of particular relevance to them.

The national fisheries conferences sponsored by the Brazilian Government set in motion a process of organization building among fisherwomen. The launch of the ANP, and subsequent activities to reveal the critical occupational health issues of fisherwomen, are fully in support of the SSF Guidelines recommendations.

The decision of the Health Ministry to conduct epidemiological studies along the lines of the study produced by the women fishers is a demonstration of gender mainstreaming by States to address the gender inequalities in the sector. It is in line with the recommendations in **Para 12.4**, which calls for the direct involvement of fishing communities in development processes, including research.

Action points for policy-makers

1. Include gender mainstreaming and capacity building in all aspects of planning and policy for the small-scale fisheries sector.

Action points for CSOs

1. Engage with women in communities and help identify and articulate comprehensive demands for their rights in policy measures for the fisheries sector.

Learning from the community

Capacity development is also recognized in the SSF Guidelines as not merely being a matter of outside intervention. There are knowledge systems, skills and organizational capacities available within communities that should be utilized for capacity development. Accordingly, urges all parties to “recognize that capacity development should build on existing knowledge and skills”. It further calls for building resilience and adaptive capacity of small-scale fishing communities regarding disasters and climate change. The example of post-tsunami relief in Aceh (see [Case study 19](#)), in which women were able to take ownership of the process of recovery through the organization of credit schemes, is an example of a successful intervention.

The workshops described in [Box 18](#) appear, at first glance, unrelated to capacity development. However, it soon becomes clear that while the stated objectives of the workshops were to discuss either the SSF Guidelines or the present handbook, the exercise of coming together and interacting in a structured forum led to the sharing of experience; the evolution of knowledge; the articulation of collective issues and needs; and the opportunity for the women participants to exercise and improve their leadership and interpersonal skills – in short, the workshops led to capacity development.

Box 18: Discussing the SSF Guidelines

The importance of there being a flexible process of learning and knowledge transfer, stressed in **Para 12.3** of the SSF Guidelines, is also emphasized in the experience of workshops organized by the ICSF in different countries to discuss the implementation of the Guidelines, and also to gather feedback during the development of the present handbook.

For instance, workshops in Maharashtra, India, held from January to February in 2016 to identify local needs related to the implementation of the SSF Guidelines, helped to identify certain core issues that women in local fishing communities were facing: for instance, the expropriation by municipal authorities of fish processing lands used by women for private property development.

Similarly, during a meeting of women representatives of small-scale fishing communities of West Africa, held in Senegal on 5 October 2016 to gather feedback on the present handbook, participants developed twelve case studies (based on their own experiences) covering issues of governance of tenure; coastal resource management; employment and decent work; value chains, post-harvest activities and trade; and policy coherence. A related workshop in Costa Rica held on 5 October 2016 specifically brought out the need for simplified and user-friendly versions of the SSF Guidelines, with translations into local languages and photographs and images from different cultures. The workshop also stressed the need for indigenous women to have their own separate spaces for discussions.

Source: ICSF, 2016c, 2016d.

In this context, it is useful to recall the case study on the public hearing organized by SEWA in Kerala, India (see [Case study 26](#)). This too allowed for a two-way process of knowledge sharing, while providing an opportunity for equitable participation of women in representative structures. The public hearing provided a forum for interaction between government agencies and a grassroots women's organization in small-scale fishing communities. Government participation allowed for clarification on various issues and also strengthened public accountability, since officials would be answerable to the promises they made. Such interactions also allowed for individual skill development, while building organizational capacity to engage with government departments.

Capacity development thus need not necessarily be a separate, structured activity. The first step is to verify that women are engaged as equal participants in representative structures. Thereafter, the process of participation, through exposure to diverse challenges and learning opportunities, can be an empowering experience, allowing women to develop and sharpen the skills they require. This real-time exposure can help women learn leadership skills, support them in forming their own organizations, and help them engage with the government and other outside agencies. Their newly acquired assertiveness may also be expressed within the family and community spheres, challenging gender stereotypes. Gender mainstreaming here becomes a consequence of experiential learning.

Key policy recommendations: Capacity development

For policy makers

Structural conditions for capacity development

- › Beginning with comprehensive policy, ensure an enabling environment for the social and economic development of women in the small-scale fisheries sector.
- › Promote policies that build on existing knowledge systems, skills and organizational capacities available within communities for capacity development among women.

Women in decision-making and leadership

- › Extend policy support for greater representation of women in leadership roles, decision-making positions and policy bodies.
- › Collaborate with CSOs to facilitate public dialogue with women representatives on issues of concern in the small-scale fisheries sector.
- › Ensure and facilitate equitable participation of women representatives at all levels in government programmes for the small-scale fisheries sector throughout the value chain.

Market support

- › Collaborate with CSOs in market support programmes to help women in post-harvest activities become more competitive.

Organizational development

- › Extend policy support for women to organize themselves, for example through cooperatives, professional organizations and networks.

Key recommendations

For CSOs

- › Promote and support organization building, such as the setting up of cooperatives, among women fishers.
- › Work with women in small-scale fishing communities to enhance their organization and leadership capabilities.
- › Support the formation of local and regional networks of organizations in small-scale fisheries to promote mutual information sharing, learning and joint action.



11. Implementation support and monitoring

While the formulation of the SSF Guidelines has been a milestone in the history of the small-scale fisheries sector, its meaningful and effective implementation remains a formidable challenge. The SSF Guidelines call upon all parties to “implement these Guidelines in accordance with national priorities ...” (Para 13.1). The primary responsibility for implementation is given to States, while other stakeholders are also tasked with roles and responsibilities so that the broad objectives of the Guidelines may be achieved. It is essential that women fishers, fishworkers and their representatives intervene early in the implementation process in order to have a voice in charting its direction, goals, methods and outcomes.

The first step in implementation is the formal endorsement of the SSF Guidelines by States. This must then be followed by the translation of the Guidelines into policy and practice. Throughout this process, there has to be commitment from States and other stakeholders. Advocacy efforts on the part of fisheries departments, and small-scale fishing communities and their supporters, are also vital.

A framework for implementation

[Box 19](#) provides examples of the elements of an implementation process for the SSF Guidelines, including gender considerations. A few simple steps for implementation are outlined below.

First, the process should bring together the various stakeholders in the sector. They should collectively engage in setting sector-specific policy priorities. This should be a participatory and bottom-up process, involving consultation with local communities.

Second, the small-scale fisheries sector and its constituent elements need to be specified or clarified. The SSF Guidelines themselves do not offer this definition, but leave it to individual countries to do so according to their local contexts. For women, it is very important that the definition covers the full range of the work they do along the fish value chain, including in pre-harvest, harvest and post-harvest. Local differences have to be articulated, and common interests need to be carried forward when defining policy and programme priorities. Given the dynamic and rapidly changing nature of the sector, it is important to subject the definition to periodic review.

Third, a process of harmonization needs to be initiated involving the alignment of national fisheries priorities with goals defined for the small-scale fisheries sector in consultation with, among others, the representatives of small-scale fisheries, including women throughout the fish value chain. This is likely to be a cyclical, interactive and iterative process involving rounds of consultation and debate (Jentoft, 2014). It is very important that the commitment to gender equity and equality in the SSF Guidelines be reflected in this process, and that women in fishing communities and their legitimate representatives be integrally involved. The example from Brazil in [Case study 28](#) is a good illustration of this process.

Fourth, interventions in small-scale fisheries should follow the participatory goals defined for the sector. There should be monitoring mechanisms that define gender-sensitive outcome and process indicators, and measure compliance in participation with the various stakeholders.

Box 19: Example of elements of a Regional Plan of Action (RPOA)

- › Regional and national government policy commitment to promote a National Plan of Action (NPOA) for the implementation of the SSF Guidelines.
- › Sustainable and equitable management of small-scale fisheries, and market access for their products.
- › Empowerment of small-scale fishers and their communities to participate in and benefit from sustainable development associated with the fisheries and resources upon which they depend.
- › Improved livelihoods and working conditions of small-scale fishing communities.
- › Mainstreaming of gender considerations as an integral part of small-scale fisheries development strategies.
- › Reduced vulnerability to natural hazards, climate variability and climate change, as well as increased climate resilience.

Source: FAO, 2015c.

Stakeholders in implementation

A democratic and inclusive implementation strategy is more likely to succeed than one that is imposed. Therefore, a balanced and equitable partnership approach and cross-sector collaboration are prerequisites for successful implementation (FAO, 2015b). This would call for:

- › government support, political engagement and investment in capacity and participatory decision-making of women in fishing communities and their representatives, at national and local levels;
- › the support, collective action and full participation of women fishers, fishworkers and their representative organizations;
- › the support of civil society organizations, Non-governmental Organizations, academics and researchers for mainstreaming gender equality in the fisheries sector at all levels.

While cross-sector collaboration is important, it is also true that in the context of the sector's gender inequality, there is a risk of the SSF Guidelines being interpreted in ways that disregard the needs and priorities of women in fishing communities. It is important to ensure that the introduction of new partners in the implementation process does not affect the integrity of the SSF Guidelines; for this, it is imperative that there be common agreement on the content of the SSF Guidelines and its interpretation (FAO, 2015b). It is equally important to ensure that such common agreement is established through a participatory and democratic process involving women fishers, fishworkers and their representatives.

Raising awareness about the SSF Guidelines

Awareness and understanding of the SSF Guidelines is a necessary first step in getting the full involvement of communities in implementing the SSF Guidelines. For this purpose, it is necessary to relate the SSF Guidelines to local specifics, using case studies to understand issues from different regions. **Para 13.3**, while calling on States and other parties to disseminate the SSF Guidelines, emphasizes the importance of gender mainstreaming and women's roles in the sector. Language and local stakeholder participation become very important to the process. Past experience of FAO and groups like the ICSF show how with local CSO support, lively discussions can elicit community responses that relate their situations to the experiences shared from other regions (see also [Box 18](#)).

Implementing the SSF Guidelines

The SSF Guidelines in **Para 13.2** call upon development organizations to support States in implementing the SSF Guidelines, including through technical cooperation, financial assistance and institutional capacity development.

The Guidelines specifically call for the responsible use of financial resources and the effective use of aid. In particular, where aid intervention flows from developed countries to fisheries in developing countries, care has to be taken that local interests are prioritized, and local sensitivities are respected. This handbook has referred to many examples where outside intervention resulted in positive and negative impacts for different sections of small-scale fishing communities (see for instance [Case study 19](#) on post-tsunami rehabilitation in Aceh, Indonesia as a positive example; and [Case study 23](#) on Marshall Point in Nicaragua as an example of failed outside aid intervention).

The following case study of the programme intervention by the RFLP in six countries brings out many aspects of successful aid implementation in coastal small-scale fishing communities.

Case study 29: Regional Fisheries Livelihood Programme for South and Southeast Asia (RFLP)

The RFLP was a programme funded by the Government of Spain from 2009-2013 and implemented by FAO in six countries: Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam. The programme sought to improve the livelihood of coastal small-scale fishing communities, while contributing to sustainability. The four main gender-related aims of the project were to: contribute to reducing gender bias and inequality; encourage participation of both men and women in project activities; create conditions for equitable access to project resources and benefits; and create conditions for gender-equitable participation in project implementation and decision-making.

The project followed a four-stage iterative process: design -> implementation -> monitoring and evaluation -> knowledge sharing.

- > The *design* phase included capacity building, and gender analysis using baseline surveys.
- > In the *implementation* phase, the focus was on flexibility of activity implementation plans to allow more women to participate. Continuous effort was made to improve the level of women's participation.
- > The *monitoring and evaluation* phase used gender-sensitive indicators, derived from baseline surveys and gender analysis in each country. Sex-disaggregated data related to project activities at all levels was collected and used in gender impact assessments.

- › *Knowledge sharing* was carried out through national and regional project meetings. The RFLP also facilitated participation of key representatives from the project areas in international meetings.

The monitoring and evaluation reports were made available to both the Government of Spain and the governments of the respective participating countries.

The RFLP had several significant impacts on gender mainstreaming. In the Philippines, it helped to integrate gender into the Coastal and Fisheries Management Plans of local government units. As a result, women acted as fish wardens and fishery law enforcers. In Sri Lanka, inclusion of women in co-management committees was made compulsory. The government revised the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Act to allow women to become members of fishery committees. Certain negative effects were acknowledged by the programme. In both Cambodia and the Philippines, greater participation of women in the projects meant an increase in their personal workload, as they still had to do most of the domestic work (Lentisco, 2012).

Let's analyse this...

The RFLP is a good example of responsible aid implementation. It helped in combining financial assistance and institutional capacity building (**Para 13.2**). It used a process of gender-sensitive monitoring to ensure gender mainstreaming in its programmes (**Para 13.4**). It sought to ensure dissemination of project information, including gender analysis, to a wide set of interested stakeholders with a view to institutionalizing the gender mainstreaming gains of the programme (**Para 13.3**). It is in this context of institutionalizing project gains that some significant long-term impacts were achieved in the Philippines and Sri Lanka.

Action points for policy-makers

1. Involve women in programmes right from the planning stage, and encourage their participation in all aspects of programme design, including developing gender-sensitive indicators for monitoring programmes.
2. Ensure women are represented at all levels of programme implementation. This calls for special attention to the needs of women in order for them to balance their time between domestic work and programme meetings.
3. Include gender mainstreaming as an integral component of all programmes

Action points for CSOs

1. Assist communities in promoting gender mainstreaming as a part of community life.

Monitoring implementation

Monitoring systems for evaluating the effectiveness of programme implementation need to be carefully designed. Robust metrics and gender-sensitive indicators are needed that capture the full range and value of women's contributions to the sector, and that also reflect linkages with food security, nutrition and poverty eradication (see [Box 17](#)). Often, performance and monitoring indicators are defined narrowly, with the interests of certain stakeholders (especially women and other marginalized groups) hardly represented, let alone prioritized. For instance, fishery research and assessments often focus on ecological effects of alternative management systems. The impacts are assessed primarily in terms of fish stocks. Economic factors (harvest costs, processing yields, market access) or community factors (women's participation, decision-making, food security) tend to be overlooked, or given low priority.

It is also important that stakeholders are themselves participants in monitoring and programme evaluation processes. Their involvement ensures that the monitoring process is organic, and not a mechanical exercise of ticking boxes and filling out performance matrixes. The participatory evaluation process also helps highlight process issues that are less easily captured by performance parameters. Finally, these exercises become opportunities for capacity building, especially for women to voice their input and ensure their interests and priorities are represented in review and future planning.

In the context of the narrow definition of impact measurement, many fisheries policy management systems have started emphasizing “multidimensional indicator systems” for measuring programme and policy effectiveness (Anderson *et al.*, 2015). An example of this is the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) system, which includes a composite set of measures (e.g. ecology, economy, community) and sector indicators (e.g. stock performance, and harvest and post-harvest sector performance). While such complex indicators may measure composite performance, the large number of parameters and the level of complexity involved might pose implementation challenges with respect to ease of use and participation for small-scale fishing communities, particularly their women members. This might lead to top-down programme management and monitoring.

Successfully incorporating gender equity and equality into the implementation of the SSF Guidelines would also require the democratic participation and support of the research and academic community, including the incorporation of gender analyses and other gender mainstreaming into research methodologies and frameworks. Further, the emphasis in the SSF Guidelines on the use of “participatory assessment methodologies” ([Para 12.4](#)) needs to be respected. Women in fishing communities should be looked upon not merely as objects of study but as active participants in the research process, with a fundamental right to access information and have input on policy recommendations being made about their lives and livelihood.

The following case study illustrates how gender mainstreaming may be strengthened through the use of gender audits at all stages of research interventions.

Case study 30: Mainstreaming gender in the BOBLME project

The FAO Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystems (BOBLME) project covers eight countries: Maldives, Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. In support of gender mainstreaming, a gender audit of the basic project documents was carried out in 2012.

The focus of the BOBLME project is on transboundary environmental issues in the participant countries. These countries vary widely in terms of their ranking on the global gender gap index, ranging from 39 for Sri Lanka to 107 for India. The gender audit found key BOBLME documents to be gender-blind. The Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis documents were found to be either gender-blind, or to have bypassed human considerations altogether. The lack of gender considerations was therefore found to be reflected in the draft Strategic Action Plan. The audit report suggested a gender-sensitive pathway to impact, which would be effected through inclusion of strict gender-sensitive considerations in project management and in the composition of national teams. It also suggested a gender sensitivity outcome mapping to help maintain commitment within the project to gender equality (BOBLME, 2012). The design of the second phase of the BOBLME has taken these findings into account.

Let's analyse this...

The audit results show how gender does not automatically get integrated as a component of intervention projects, especially when the projects, as in this case of focusing on transboundary environmental issues, do not seem to have an obvious gender component. However, the importance of retaining a human rights/gender-sensitive approach is evident if we see interventions as also impacting on the lives and livelihood of coastal communities. The SSF Guidelines stress this when they require States and other parties to use participatory assessment methodologies, and to include gender-sensitive approaches to project monitoring (Para 13.4).

Action points for policy-makers

1. Include the understanding of gender implications as part of any research or development programme involving ecosystems of which fishing communities are part.
2. Communicate to communities, including their women members, research findings that have implications for their ecosystems in terms of climate change and other environmental and economic impacts.

Action points for CSOs

1. Help communities, including women representatives in communities, to understand changes within their ecosystems, and to comprehend the implications of larger research findings for their lives.

Gender mainstreaming in government policy

During planning and budgeting activities, government policy-makers should ensure that the outcomes of programmes match their gender-specific intentions. The long-term objectives of these intentions would however need to be understood and incorporated in the planning exercise. To explain this, the analysis of gender and public expenditure in the West Bengal state budget in India identified a three-way classification of budget categories: relief policies (for example, widow pensions); gender reinforcing assistance (for example, programmes for women's reproductive health); and equality promoting schemes (for example, child crèches allowing women to go out to work). While the first two programmes are important initiatives for women, it is the third that can actually help promote gender mainstreaming (Banerjee, 2003). It is important here to understand that all expenditure on "women's development" does not necessarily result in developing capacity or mainstreaming gender.

Gender mainstreaming cannot be implemented as mere programme implementation; it requires the sensitization of all actors. To begin with, State authorities dealing with the small-scale fisheries sector have to be sensitized on gender issues.

Also, the goal of gender mainstreaming cannot be merely programme-driven. For lasting effect, gender mainstreaming must become part of legislation – both sector-specific, and as part of legislation across sectors. For instance, measures based on positive discrimination might be used to target children, particularly girls, from small-scale fishing communities, in order to help them gain professional skills geared either towards alternative livelihoods or towards improving small-scale fisheries.

Policy initiatives to support gender mainstreaming within government programmes and interventions of development agencies would include:

- › collection of sex-disaggregated data;
- › use of gender-sensitive indicators to set priorities and assess outcomes;
- › use of gender analysis to design programmes to promote gender equity and equality;
- › gender auditing of programmes to monitor and assess their gender impact ¹⁹;
- › tools and resources in support of gender budgeting ²⁰.

Raising gender awareness

The SSF Guidelines call upon all parties to work together for the effective dissemination of information on gender and women's roles, to "highlight steps that need to be taken to improve women's status in work" (Para 13.3). The dictum "knowledge is power" applies very specifically to the small-scale fisheries sector. The under-reporting of statistics with regard to the sector leads to its devaluation during policy deliberations. Women are even more invisible in such enumerations. Therefore, one of the first steps in programme implementation would be to focus on the role of women in the small-scale fisheries sector, in particular their issues and needs. The second step would be to involve relevant stakeholders in addressing these issues and needs in gender-just and equitable ways.

¹⁹ See, for example, Moser (2005).

²⁰ See, for example, Elson (2006); Budlender and Hewitt (2003); and the UN Women Financing For Gender Equality webpage (available at <http://gender-financing.unwomen.org/en>).

In this context, the SSF Guidelines also call upon States to facilitate the formation of platforms with strong representation from civil society organizations to oversee the implementation of the SSF Guidelines (**Para 13.4**). The importance of platforms with representation from communities and support organizations is also emphasized in other chapters in the SSF Guidelines (see **Para 10.6**, **Para 11.8** and **Para 12.1**). The SSF Guidelines therefore give considerable importance to the role of support organizations and their networks in securing positive and sustainable changes within the small-scale fisheries sector, while continuing to place the primary responsibility on States for ensuring inclusive development, with special attention paid to gender mainstreaming.

Global Assistance Programme

The SSF Guidelines place a special responsibility on FAO to promote and support the development of a Global Assistance Programme (GAP), with regional plans of action to support the implementation of the Guidelines (**Para 13.6**). It has been recommended that the GAP be further developed in a participatory manner with the roles of different partners in the implementation of the SSF Guidelines clearly defined (FAO, 2015d). Participatory meetings to envision the scope and functioning of the GAP have already taken place, and an FAO Umbrella Programme has been established (FAO, 2015b, 2015c). It is important that all stakeholders and fishing communities remain engaged to ensure that the GAP is effective in enhancing gender equity and equality at every level of the small-scale fisheries sector.

Key policy recommendations: Implementation support and monitoring

For policy makers

National plan

- › In consultation with women in fishing communities and their representative organizations, formulate a national strategy, such as a National Plan of Action, to guide the comprehensive and gender-equitable implementation of the SSF Guidelines.

Defining small-scale fisheries

- › Define the small-scale fisheries sector in the local context, or if a definition is in use, revise it (if necessary) to ensure that it adequately captures and reflects the work and contributions of women along the entire value chain.

Gender mainstreaming

- › Ensure gender mainstreaming across all policies for the small-scale fisheries sector.
- › Identify the policy measures needed to enhance the status of women and their work in the small-scale fisheries sector.
- › Formulate gender-sensitive protocols for programme implementation in local contexts for the small-scale fisheries sector, including for programmes supported by external aid.
- › Ensure gender-sensitive project monitoring protocols for all stages of programme implementation, with transparent monitoring indicators that balance goals of sustainability and economic growth with those of gender justice.
- › Encourage CSOs to join in constituting participatory project review and follow-up mechanisms for large projects in the small-scale fisheries sector, particularly to ensure gender sensitivity.

Interpreting the SSF Guidelines

- › Ensure that in working with multiple partners and stakeholders for programme implementation in the small-scale fisheries sector, the interpretation of the Guidelines is democratically agreed upon, including by women in fishing communities and their representatives, and that there is no dilution of the provisions of the Guidelines.

Key recommendations

For CSOs

- › Work with women in fishing communities to formulate local plans and strategies of action, in order to ensure gender-equitable and locally relevant implementation of the SSF Guidelines.
- › Facilitate the participation of women in fishing communities in regional networks to formulate and advance regional plans and strategies of action.
- › Facilitate the participation of women in fishing communities at the national level to formulate a national plan or strategy.
- › Work with women and men in communities, and with project implementers, to support participatory and gender-sensitive project planning and implementation.
- › Form networks of CSO organizations and organizations of women in the small-scale fisheries sector at local, national and regional levels to track policies and policy impacts, with particular reference to sustainable development and gender mainstreaming in the small-scale fisheries sector.
- › Assist communities in promoting gender mainstreaming as a part of community life.

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The Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) are the first internationally negotiated document dedicated specifically to the small-scale fisheries sector (see Box 1). The Guidelines represent a global consensus on principles and guidance for small-scale fisheries governance and development (FAO, 2016d).

Notably, the principles of gender equity and equality are upheld as fundamental guiding principles in the SSF Guidelines. This represents a significant achievement towards women's empowerment. At the same time, it also represents an opportunity for governments to meet important goals related to social and economic equity and equality, environmental sustainability, and local food security, including relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

During consultations and capacity development events organized in the context of the SSF Guidelines implementation process, various stakeholders expressed the need for specific gender guidance in support of the application of the Guidelines.

This document, *Towards Gender-Equitable Small-Scale Fisheries – A handbook to support gender-equitable small-scale fisheries governance and development in the context of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication* (henceforth the “handbook”), was developed to support gender-equitable small-scale fisheries by enhancing the understanding of their gender dimensions, with a focus on the specific role and conditions of women in the small-scale fisheries sector.

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