Networking for Strength

A newly established network of women fish processors and traders promises to improve the prospects of women in Africa's post-harvest sector

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The vast fish resources of the African continent offer many benefits. Fishery and aquaculture products supply food, nutrition, income and livelihoods to hundreds of millions of people; they help earn foreign currency and represent conservation and biodiversity values of global significance.

Despite its vast marine, freshwater and aquaculture assets, the African continent continues to be saddled with numerous problems that challenge long term resource and environmental sustainability, and impede the sector's contribution to food security, poverty alleviation and national economic growth.

Recent statistics reveal that women make up more than one-fourth (27 per cent) of the workforce in the African fisheries and aquaculture sector. The great majority of these women are employed in post-harvest (91.5 per cent) making a significant contribution to food security, livelihoods and household incomes. However, although gender has been on the international development agenda for a long time, many inequalities remain and the role of women in fishery and aquaculture is often not given the attention it deserves. Women remain marginalised within the sector, both in terms of their fishing related activities and their role in decision making processes.

Cognizant of the above challenges, the African Union developed a Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa (PFRS), which was adopted by the 23rd summit of African Heads of States and Governments in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, in June 2014. One of the seven policy objectives of this Pan African strategic document is to guarantee, and sustainably strengthen, the contribution of artisanal fisheries to poverty alleviation, food and nutritional security and socio-economic benefits of fishing communities, specifically the fisherwomen, in Africa.

Two years ago, in 2016, the African Union-Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) organised a training workshop aimed at strengthening the capacity of women fish processors and traders associations on a range of issues, including: effective implementation of sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) standards; quality standards; the safe handling of fish and fisheries products for increased product shelf life; as well as access to markets and socio-economic benefits. The workshop led to a number of significant recommendations including the need to establish a continental network of associations of women fish processors and traders.

By April 2017, the dream of forming a network for African women in fisheries was realised in a consultative workshop organised by AU-IBAR in collaboration with the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA), World Fish and the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. This consultative workshop brought together 55 participants from 28 African Union Member states, including Algeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Cote D'ivoire, D.R. Congo, Egypt, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda

AU-IBAR

AWFISHNET members with the leaders of Tanzanian fisheries division and AU-IBAR after launching the network in April 2017 at Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. This consultative workshop brought together 55 participants from 28 African Union Member states

The main objective of the network is to provide a continental platform for women fish processors and traders

and Zambia. Also taking part in the workshop were regional institutions such as the Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization (LVFO), the Regional Commission of Fisheries of Gulf of Guinea (COREP) and the African Network of Women in Fisheries (RAFEP/COMHAFAT), as well as experts from environmental agencies, information dissemination agencies, donor groups and the AU-IBAR. This initiative gave birth to the African Network for Women Fish Processors and Traders (AWFISHNET). The official representatives of the new forum were elected with due consideration to regional representation and language, and an action plan was developed to guide the network's activities for the next two years. It was agreed that, pending further decision, Tanzania—the country elected as the secretariat—would house the network.

AWFISHNET members recommended that the continental network would function more efficiently if representation from each Member State came from associations belonging to recognised national women's networks. It was therefore suggested that each country establish a national women's network if it did not already have one, and further, that the capacity of these national women's associations and networks be duly strengthened. It was suggested that certain focal persons or associations be made responsible for aiding the formation of national networks and for mapping out the women's associations in fish processing and trade in their respective countries. The participating country representatives were also advised to send feedback to their fisheries line ministries.

The AWFISHNET network now uses a Facebook page and WhatsApp to communicate, and to share indigenous and technical knowledge in fisheries and development as well as business experiences.

The main objective of the network is to provide a continental platform for women fish processors and traders to achieve a range of goals. These include: collaboration and cooperation among women fish processor and trader associations across the continent; sharing of best practices, experiences, technologies and learning; effective advocacy on issues affecting women's fish processor and trader associations, including, in particular, the establishment of an enabling policy environment; building and strengthening capacities of members to effectively implement continental policies at local, national, regional and continental levels; strengthening the role and participation of fish processor and trader enterprises owned by women as Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the fisheries sector, with the objective of improving access to markets, expanding markets and marketing opportunities, thereby fostering the equitable participation of women fish processor and trader enterprises in intra-regional African fish trade.

AWFISHNET's dream of empowering women, improving access to markets; expanding markets and marketing opportunities and fostering the equitable participation of post-harvest enterprises in intra-regional African fish trade is not yet close to reality. Support is needed to strengthen the capacities of its secretariat and member groups as well as to encourage the formation of national women's networks where they do not exist. AWFISHNET sends out a call for support to recognise, utilise and enhance women's potentials and capabilities in the fisheries sector for sustainable and equitable development.

Study time

A study tour allows a group of women in Tanzania's post-harvest fisheries to visit and learn from their counterparts in Kenya

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Lack of education and a lack of skills: these were the two issues that, in a workshop organized by the Mwambao Coastal Community Network in Tanzania back in 2015, women coastal East Africa had identified as the main barriers to value addition in post-harvest fisheries.

A year later, in order to address these challenges, Mwambao, which is a network linking coastal communities and other stakeholders in Tanzania, with support from the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF), organized a study tour for women from nine districts in Tanzania—three from Zanzibar and the rest from mainland Tanzania. Accompanied by two facilitators from Mwambao and aided by the Kenyan NGO Community Action for Nature Conservation (CANCO), this group made a trip to Kenya in November 2016 to improve their knowledge on techniques of post-harvest value addition as well as marketing strategies, visiting the Kenyan fishing communities of Jimbo and Kiruwitu as well as the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KEMFRI).

The group of women first visited the coastal town of Jimbo, where members of the Jimbo Community Conservation Project (JCCP) first made a presentation on their conservation efforts, and then, demonstrated the methods and materials they used for processing anchovies (known locally as *dagaa*), including sorting, cleaning, boiling and drying of the fish. A number of differences between the methods used in Tanzania and Kenya were observed. The participants felt that in Kenya, higher quality materials and better techniques were used, such as net-like plastic sheets for storing hand-picked anchovies ready for boiling. Following these discussions, the group visited the Jimbo community fish landing site, to see the different boats used by the community and the Beach Management Unit (BMU) for patrols, fishing and any potential emergencies. The Tanzanians were particularly impressed by the strong collaboration between the BMU and the community, evidenced, for example, by a fish market that is managed by the BMU.

Next, the participants visited the KEMFRI where they were shown current technological innovations designed to help communities

ALI THANI

The study tour taught the participants many valuable lessons: methods for improved post-harvest processing, the use of superior materials such as solar power instead of kerosene lamps,

improve fisheries activities such as fishing, marine-resources management and post-harvest processing. The participants were told about the operation and use of solar driers for processing, and also participated in classroom activities led by KEMFRI staff.

The group next visited the Kiruwitu Community Marine Conservation Project (KCMCP). Over the last ten years, with support from CANCO, the KCMCP has successfully implemented a range of conservation measures for coral reef ecosystems and sea turtles, conservation awareness, ecotourism and fish trading. Of particular interest was a successful community fish marketing initiative, with a direct market chain connecting, by air, the village to supermarkets and hotels in Nairobi. The market chain was facilitated by certain private companies who contributed finances and other forms of support to set it up. The success story of the KCMCP provided valuable insight into potential income generation opportunities.

The visit allowed a rich exchange of knowledge and solutions.

Since the National Women's Fisheries Conference was just round the corner, CANCO invited the group to extend their stay by two days to be able to participate in the event. Held on 19 - 20 November 2016, the conference was a forum to explore and discuss commonly shared challenges and issues faced by women in the small-scale fisheries sector. Attending the conference, the group found that the issues they faced in Tanzania were, in reality, being faced by women in other countries as well. Common challenges included harassment of women, poor governance, lack of respect for women leaders and limited overall knowledge about post-harvesting techniques.

The following day—21 November—the group participated in the World Fisheries Day celebrations, organized by CANCO with support from the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC). The event was held in Tsunza village in Kwala County of Mombasa, and attracted hundreds of members of nearby communities. It was attended by political leaders and government officials, including the Assistant Director of Fisheries and the representatives of the Blue Economy. Here too, participants discussed challenges faced by coastal communities in managing and accessing marine natural resources. Limited consultations with local communities, the lack of transparency related to large development projects, such as ports, railways and roads, and the challenges posed by the loss of fishing grounds were also discussed. The event included competitions and speeches, and the Tanzanian women had the opportunity to participate in mangrove planting.

The study tour taught the participants many valuable lessons: methods for improved post-harvest processing, the use of superior materials such as solar power instead of kerosene lamps, the role of the fisheries sector in community development and education, increased participation of women in all fisheries activities as well as successful collaboration between communities, including BMUs, and private companies for conservation and income generation.

While the Kenyan and Tanzanian communities both identified many shared challenges—acknowledging these in fact as challenges facing small-scale fishing communities throughout most of the Global South—the visit allowed a rich exchange of knowledge and solutions. In addition to the improved anchovy processing methods they witnessed, the Kenyan communities were also impressed by the Village Community Banks (VICOBA) set up for improved livelihood development of Kenya's fishing communities. As the study tour concluded, the Kenyan hosts expressed their hopes of being able to conduct a return exchange visit, with Kenyan participants travelling south of the border to learn from their Tanzanian neighbours.

Small-scale fishers, particularly women, continue to face significant social, economic and political challenges. Under the circumstances, such initiatives offer valuable opportunities to share knowledge, to look for common solutions, and to strengthen rights and livelihoods.

Banking on closure

An octopus bank on the island of KisiwaPanza in Tanzania witnesses a large return on investment after a three month no-take period

By **Lorna Slade** (lornaslade@mwambao.or.tz), Executive Director of Mwambao Coastal Community Network, Tanzania

Fishers of the island of KisiwaPanza in the region of Pemba in Tanzania, caught some very large octopus in the first week of July this year. It was a Thursday morning; the 2 of July. More than 600 fishers had converged on the reef flat known as Ngazi, and when the octopi were sighted, pandemonium broke out as people ran to reach the best octopus holes first. One woman pulled an 8 kg giant out from its den, an extremely rare find in KisiwaPanza, where on average 65 per cent of the catch is 600 g or less. The reason for the excitement, and for the big catch, was that this was the first day the Ngazi fishing ground had been opened after a three-month period of closure. The results of the trial closure have been hugely encouraging.

Octopus fishing is an important livelihood source for both women and men, with over 60 per cent of the inhabitants of KisiwaPanza considering the day octopus (*Octopus cyanea*) the most important income resource for the family. Actually, very few local people eat octopus; almost all of the catch is shipped internationally to Spain, Italy, France and Portugal, with some going to tourist hotels in Unguja, the main island of Zanzibar.

Fishers' lives in KisiwaPanza are dictated by the moon; there are two eight-day fishing seasons in a month referred to as *bamvua* in Kiswahili, which are linked to the spring tides of the new- and full-moon periods when the reef areas are the most exposed. The four or five days in between the spring tides are 'rest days' when other domestic tasks are taken care of. Traditionally, people walk the shallow reef at low tide and use sticks made from mangrove roots for digging the octopus out of their holes amongst the coral rubble.

MWAMBAO COASTAL COMMUNITY NETWORK

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The day octopus has a short life cycle and rarely lives beyond 24 months. Both females and males breed only once in their lifetime. Once she has mated, the female barricades herself in a den amongst coral on the lower reaches of the reef. Here she lays her eggs and attaches them to the ceiling of the den. She stays there for a month without eating, protecting her eggs and gently aerating them with a flow of fresh seawater. She is very vulnerable at this time. The young hatch after 30 days and disperse with the ocean currents, before settling again on the reef flat where they subsist on small fish and crustaceans. The mother octopus, known as *koo* in Kiswahili, uses all her bodily resources when brooding eggs, and rarely survives for long after the young have hatched.

Many things have changed, however, in KisiwaPanza over the last 25 years and all is not well with the octopus population. Traditional sticks for hunting have now been replaced with more efficient hooked iron rods, and many men who fish now have access to masks and fins to fish for octopus in deeper waters. Some even use scuba gear. The fishing pressure has increased as the local village population has grown, together with the burgeoning demand for export. Today, fewer fishers take rest on the traditional days, continuing instead to fish throughout the month. The mature female octopus is being fished out of her breeding den and young octopus seldom get the chance to grow much beyond 500 grams, a size too small for breeding.

Fortunately, the day octopus is one species that can rebound relatively quickly with the right management regime. This is because they grow so fast—they are capable of doubling their size in just two months, and reaching 12 kg in 18 months. Thus if the fishing pressure is removed for just two to three months, the resulting catch is convincing and the females get a chance to breed undisturbed for the required length of time for the eggs to hatch. This management model has been adapted to good effect in recent years in Madagascar and Rodrigues in Mauritius.

The island of KisiwaPanza lies within the Marine Managed Area known as PECCA (Pemba Channel Conservation Area). Discussions among the Smartfish programme of the Indian Ocean Commission, the Mwambao Coastal Community Network, Fauna & Flora International, PECCA and KisiwaPanza community members began in November 2014, and the community decided to pilot this approach. These partners have also been working with communities and authorities to build the capacity of the local fisheries committees so that they may play an active and legitimate role in governance and management of all of their marine resources.

The villagers selected 60 hectares for closure, also known as a no-take zone (NTZ) and a sub-committee was formed to patrol the area for three months. As members of Mwambao, we trained monitors to record the catch and capture any increases in production. We also worked with the sub-committee and with PECCA staff to create by-laws and to carry out awareness-raising campaigns in neighbouring villages. Women had a major role in deciding on the timing of the NTZ; they suggested that lifting the closure in the expensive month of Ramadan would really help with all the additional costs at this time—in effect, the reserve would act as an octopus 'bank.' The closure began with village approval in mid-March and everything progressed according to plan, with only one minor poaching incident reported. The community decided that, at the opening, no hooked metal rods but only the traditional sticks would be used, giving the smaller immature octopus a greater chance of surviving.

This is the first pilot closure for octopus in the islands and it is a valuable demonstration of successful collaborative management for the Marine Conservation Unit and PECCA authorities. The Deputy Minister for the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries Development officially cut the ribbon at Ngazi on the 2 of July and everyone was encouraged by the outcome.

Not all of the 600 or so fishers managed to catch an octopus but there were lively discussions about increasing the fishery closure area next time. Octopus 'banks' are an exciting first step towards building capacity and engagement at the village level to improve the management of their fisheries.

Mwambao hopes to expand this initiative to more villages in 2016 and to also increase the 'bank deposit', as it were, in KisiwaPanza, by helping them extend the area of the temporary no-take zone.

If the fishing pressure is removed for just two to three months, the resulting catch is convincing.

Perched on the brink of survival

Extracted from the author's doctoral thesis on Lake Victoria's Nile Perch fishery, this article reveals how women are adapting capitalist strategies to beat the stranglehold of export markets

By **Modesta Medard** (modesta_medard@yahoo.co.uk), Social scientist, Mwanza, Tanzania

Lake Victoria is the largest freshwater lake in Africa and the second largest in the world, covering approximately 68,800 square kilometers. It is spread across three countries: Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. The lake contains many fish species and generates substantial income opportunities, food, employment and foreign exchange. Some four million of the 40 million people that live and work in the lake basin derive their livelihood directly from the lake.

Significantly, in the last three decades, the fishery sector has attracted many new entrants. An export oriented industrial processing and marketing infrastructure to industrially process fish for export has emerged along the major lakeshore towns of Kisumu in Kenya, Musoma and Mwanza in Tanzania, and Entebbe and Jinja in Uganda. By the mid-1990s, thousands of young men found employment as fishers, workers in the fish processing industry, and fish handlers. However, the main beneficiaries were the owners of the export processing factories. These owners are mostly of Asian origin.

Fishers have nicknamed the Nile perch '*mkombozi*' or 'the saviour'. The name highlights its regional economic significance, as the Nile Perch represents a significant portion of East Africa's export earnings, generating about $370 million per annum—68 per cent of the region's export earnings.

MODESTA MEDARD

A Bembe fisherman being helped by his son.
In Nile Perch fishing new organizational forms are continually emerging

The export industry is an aggressive market player, distributing the value added in highly unequal ways. The export factories control most of the Nile Perch catch through their control over the fishing investment, distribution and trading networks. More importantly, it controls credit arrangements in the form of cash and materials—given to fish collectors (middlemen) and fishing camp owners and operators. This tendency has resulted in high fishing intensity, notably for Nile Perch, which has triggered a range of controls by the export industry to streamline and improve production for export market and to safeguard food safety aspects.

The region is predominantly rural, although migration to towns is increasing. Along the lakeshore, 'boom towns' with new markets, transport facilities, bars, guest houses and recreational facilities have sprung up in response to the demand for fish and services to sustain the fishing industry both economically and materially. Not all services are up to standard, and most 'boom towns' resemble shanty towns. Fishing camp or boat owners, boat crew members, fish agents and handlers, fish traders and processors, cooks, net mounters and repairers, and bait fishers and suppliers make a living directly from the exploitation of the lake's fish resources. In contrast to the vibrant fishing economy, the traditional agrarian economy is suffering from a downturn in the production of its major cash crops: rice and cotton.

Despite the control exercised by export oriented operations, there is still competition and contestation in the Nile Perch markets and business. One of the most notable changes along the Lake is the emerging diversity of fishing relations and networks.

MlegwaMbuto, who is a boat crew member, remarked how women strive to control fish production and the lakeside fish markets in Ntama at Kome Island: 'These women are very clever—they control us, the fishing activity and the trade arrangements!'

There are many fishing relations in Nile Perch fishery that are dependent on social systems, market networks and governance processes. In Nile Perch fishing, capitalist

and commercial relations of production have become predominant, and new organizational forms are continually emerging in local, national and regional markets.

One example of transformation in Nile Perch fishing relations is the change from subsistence fishing to a 'capitalist deal' in the form of partnerships, as local markets attempt to escape the relationships of dependency and the subjective and exploitative conditions that characterise the export oriented markets. It is insightful to look into these dynamics at local levels in relation to global processes that have reorganized production and changed patterns of ownership and control.

To give an example, the Bembe and the Ha are fishers from Lake Tanganyika who migrated to Lake Victoria during 1992-1993. Although they say they belong to the Kigoma Region of Tanzania, local residents claim that they are not only from Tanzania, but from Zaire and Burundi as well. The Bembe and Ha fishers are experts in using single nets, locally known as *makila*. These three-ply nets that, on average, are of 3.5 and 4.5 inches mesh size, 90 metres length and 25 or 26 mesh nets width, are labelled 'illegal' by fisheries regulators. The fishers use canoes that have three or four *wajeshi* (crew members). A canoe that carries three crew members would be eight feet or 2.4 m long; one that carries four crew members would be 12 feet or 3.6 m long. Each *wajeshi* has a small wooden box into which he packs 10-15 single nets. Each boat, therefore, carries 30-60 nets, depending on the number of crew. They set their nets in the evening, and haul them in early the following morning. They do not stay with their nets or organize patrol boats, so the risk of net theft is high. Investment in this fishery is facilitated by mainly female shore-bound traders who will rent a boat jointly with crew, hire the crew and provide gear, while retaining full control over the catch. If the crew, for whatever reason, is unable to contribute towards rent for the boat, the women step in and pay for them. In the words of Mustafa Ali, a fisher: 'Each of us is given fishing nets, and because the catch varies from each one's nets, we face different situations. Nets are stolen or frequently drift, and we end up in continuous debt. Moreover, each of us is frequently loaned cash independently by the women, to feed our families. If I catch 60 fish, for every three fish, I get TSh 1,000 (USD 0.67) while the women will sell them for TSh 2,000 (USD 1.3). But we are not interested in paying off all our debts. Where would we go? The lake is everything for us. We are here with our elderly parents, wives and children. The real challenge lies in the frequent bribes to officials so that they don't confiscate the nets and fish because we fish small size Nile Perch. We don't own fishing licenses and we use unregistered boats. The women traders are behind us and they handle all sorts of hurdles.'

Women play an important role in the Bembe and the Ha communities to gain access to the fishery operations. Decisions over net purchases, renting boats, buying fishing accessories and where to sell the catch, are all made by women. Women forge a relationship with one *mjeshi* (guarantor) who is not necessarily a boat captain but a trustworthy person, typically settled with his family along the shore, who is obliged to look for another two or three *wajeshi* for a complete fishing unit. Women use this strategy in order to allow freedom of choice in constituting *wajeshi*, who can work together with minimal conflict and risk. After landing the catch, the women organize the sale, keeping aside some fish for the *wajeshi's* food and for their own domestic needs.

The women in the fishery under study had a minimum of one and a maximum of three peddled fishing boats. It has been reported that before 2008, agents representing export processing factories would buy fish in the 0.5-1.5 kg range. But now they buy only fish of 1.5 kg and above, and only the remainder goes to female traders and processors, and bicycle traders.

The basic idea with this arrangement is that the women front the initial costs of startup, such as the nets and other fishing accessories, and also bear costs of replacement of worn-out or stolen nets. They identify a guarantor—who in effect guarantees the investment by agreeing to fish for the women—and the business can shift to a guarantor if he manages to pay the costs of the nets and other fishing accessories. The cost for renting a small boat, which is about TSh 35,000-40,000 (USD 23-27) per month, is shared by the crew but, often, women provide the crew with small credits if they have no cash. Eventually, the women control all fish sales, and the guarantor and his crew receive compensation by way of wages or fish. The guarantor also assumes the risk of his crew—if any of them were to make off with the nets, the guarantor is obliged to replace these. The same is true if the nets are lost on the lake, or stolen by someone else. He also reduces the women's administrative responsibilities by managing the crew, their complaints and their problems.

One example of transformation in the Nile Perch fishing relations is the change from subsistence fishing to a 'capitalist deal'.

The continuous struggle by women and men in these markets is also about escaping dependency and unfair relationships in export oriented markets.

The risks are many. On the lake, the fishers are wary of armed patrols from the big commercial fishing camps, which are liable to attack and chase them away from the fishing grounds. Their nets, too, are illegal and, if there is any trouble with the authorities, it is the crew—and not the women—who bear the responsibility of gear seizure, and the threat of court action.

According to MlegwaMbuto, 'If the woman doesn't like you personally or you are unlucky, she can hire someone else. There are those who have sexual relations with women just because they want to get power of ownership of the nets and the box for keeping the nets…We are the ones who go out fishing and are labelled as illegal fishers because the mesh nets are small in size. The truth is we are in a poverty cycle and lumbered with endless daily debts and an insecure life.'

The above example shows that apart from export markets, in local, national and regional markets too, capitalist arrangements characterized by employer-employee relationships are emerging. These markets are dynamic and provide substantial livelihood opportunities to local and regional communities. Much of the fish caught for these markets are labelled as 'illegal' because of their small size.

A range of Nile Perch fish sizes and other traditional fish species are caught as by-catch and also enter these markets. The competing markets do not just co-exist but also interact, so that the local, national, regional and export markets together impact the way fish resources are accessed and traded at the local level. They mutually transform each other and the socio-ecological spaces and networks that surround them. The continuous struggle by women and men in these markets is more than just about generating income. It is also about escaping dependency and unfair relationships in export oriented markets. Relationships of this nature have spread and shaped many relations in different fisheries, gear types and fishing camps.

It is evident that the strategies evolved in engaging in fish trade by these women, encompass the requirements to secure fish (capital) and power; they use individual influence and traits, social networks, local level alliances, sexual relations, and subordination of lower level actors—in this case, mainly crew members. The emerging relations of production and trade in the fishing sector in Lake Victoria are therefore a response to global and local forces, which have produced a very specific site of struggle, in the attempts to reap the benefits and escape the stranglehold of export markets.

PROFILE

Casting the net for less in the Bagamoyo fisheries —Mwanahawa and Kulthum

Ushimba (small-shrimp) collectors from Bagamoyo, Tanzania

This profile is by **Rosemarie N. Mwaipopo** (ny_lila@yahoo.com), Member, ICSF

All their lives, Mwanahawa (41) and Kulthum (22) have lived in Bagamoyo in the north eastern part of Tanzania, an area known to be rich in a variety of marine species owing to the varied ecosystems to be found there—sandy and muddy tidal flats, mangroves, coral reefs, rocky intertidal platforms, sea grass and algal beds, lagoons and estuaries.

Mwanahawa and Kulthum make their living from *kutanda ushimba* or collecting small shrimp. Such shrimp (*Acetes* sp.) are to be found along the inner shores of the Indian Ocean. This activity however is traditionally not regarded as *uvuvi* or fishing by the coastal communities, for whom fishing means only the capture fisheries, a domain of men. Yet, collecting *ushimba* has been an age-long endeavor, one that for long has provided an accessible livelihood option for coastal women. Unlike fishing, it does not require a license for entry; all the gear required is a net, or even just a piece of cloth, called *khanga*, to serve as a net; but what it does is demand physical endurance for the periods of time spent in the waters. The women go out in groups of three, usually comprising close family members. The trade is passed down the generations, usually from mother to daughter, grand-daughter or daughter-in-law.

Kulthum entered the trade when she was 12 and Mwanahawa at 20. Only fifteen known *ushimba* collectors remain today in Bagamoyo from a previously recorded number of 20. The dwindling numbers are because the work is hard and the income from it simply not enough. normal daily catch size today is about four containers weighing about ten kg each. Selling at TShs 10,000 per container, (US$ 5.71) the women can get TShs 40,000 (US$ 22.87) a day, which is divided amongst the three group members. Dried *ushimba* sold inland fetches more income but is in demand only during the dry season when fresh *ushimba* is scarce. Just five years ago, a group of women could easily hope to harvest up to ten containers a day. What explains this decline in catch?

Ushimba, according to Mwanahanwa and Kulthum, is collected during the monthly *bamvua* or spring tide. They say that the catch has been falling because of the recent entry of male collectors leading to greater competition. Also, some of the newer entrants use sophisticated fishing gear capable of greater extraction. Indeed, the numbers of fishers and boats officially recorded in the region, has more than doubled in the last 25 years. Says Kulthum, "During spring tide, many fishers converge in these waters using *ngalawa* (small vessels), and cast seine nets to which nets with small mesh size are illegally attached. So they end up catching even the small shrimp that used to come up to the near shore waters where we women traditionally have fished". Mwanahawa adds that in earlier days, the men of the community would leave near shore spaces for women; however today, the entry of outsiders has upset this traditional understanding.

Changing land use patterns means that agriculture as an alternate livelihood option is also outside the reach of Mwanahanwa, Kulthum and the other *ushimba* collectors of Bagomoyo. Their only hope today is to secure petty loans from village community banks to establish small businesses of their own. These however are still in the making.

The loss of inheritance

Rapid commercialization of the local fisheries in Tanzania's Lake Victoria region is leading to the disappearance of gifted customs and traditions

By **Modesta Medard** (modesta.medard@wur.nl; modesta_medard@yahoo.co.uk), PhD student, Rural Development Sociology, Wageningen University, The Netherlands; **Han van Dijk** and **Paul Hebinck,** RDS, Wageningen University, The Netherlands; and **Rosemarie Mwaipopo,** Department of Sociology, University of Dar Es Salaam

Lake Victoria supports Africa's largest inland fishery. In the 1950s, a new fish species, the Nile perch (*Lates niloticus*), was introduced in Lake Victoria. Whether that was a right decision has been a subject of intense debate as catastrophic results have been reported in the last two decades, with about 300 fish species all but wiped out as a result of the newcomer's predations. Today, only three fish species dominate the fishery: the Nile perch, the *dagaa* (*Rastrineobola argentea*) and tilapia.

The Nile perch is a white meaty fish, grown for export to the EU, the US, Australia and the Middle East. The *dagaa* is used more widely for human consumption and animal feeds. By 1994, the export of perch from Tanzania had reached 53,000 tonnes, a fivefold increase over average perch exports from Kenya and Uganda in the 1980s. Tanzania now has the highest export figures, closely followed by Uganda.

There are many concerns about the impact of the globalization and commodification of the Nile perch fisheries as a result of the export-led development of the sector: food and job insecurity, spread of HIV/AIDS and loss of morals in fishing communities, exploitation and unequal share of benefits, continued fishing illegalities, over investment and spread of theft and piracy. Moreover, a direct relationship between the commodification of Lake Victoria fisheries and the disappearance of traditional norms and values in fishing communities, particularly traditions and rituals in boat construction and launching, is evident.

MODESTA MEDARD

Clan eder, Magesa Lubumbika from Lugata village (Kome Island) performing fishing rituals in honour of his grandson

Historically, ritual is regarded as part of traditional knowledge, signalling an inner life of the community. This knowledge is restricted; it is meant not for all but only the 'gifted'. Apart from traditional medicine, it entails sorcery and witchcraft—the power to work up harm against an enemy. Such knowledge, beliefs and norms shape the social and economic systems of traditional fishing societies and also determine property usage—the control of a fishing boat, for instance—by families, clans and societies.

The traditional ethnic fishing groups in the Tanzanian side of Lake Victoria include the Jitas, Kerewes, the Haya, the Luo and the Zinza. Another group, the Sukumas, who were originally riverine fishers, have become major investors in the Nile perch fishery, own more boats and camps, and represent a higher proportion of crew labourers than the other groups. Among the traditional fishing groups, the Kerewes were the first to make paddle boats but, over time, the other groups have learned this craft too. With rising demand, the cost of paddle boats has steadily increased from TShs3-5 (US$0.002-0.003) in the 1940s and 1950s to TShs12-30 (US$0.01-0.02) in the 1960s and to TShs2,000-6,000 (US$1.3-4) in the 1980s, the period when the Nile perch fishery was introduced. Today, a *mninga* (hard-wood engine boat) costs about TShs3 mn (US$2,000) and a paddle boat, depending on size and type of wood, between TShs400,000 to TSh1 mn (US$267–667).

In the early days, the activity of boatbuilding was honoured by special ceremonies and rituals. The novice learnt his craft from working with an expert builder for many years, and the end of the apprenticeship was marked by an elaborate ritual that involved *kuchanja chale* or making incisions to the body, and smearing the body with medicinal

plants and black ashes. Commonly, the craft of boatbuilding was passed on from father to son or uncle to nephew but sometimes a person outside a boatbuilder's family could also be chosen for the job.

There were certain characteristics demanded of a *fundi or* good boatbuilder: good conduct with people; trust; the ability to keep secrets; tolerance; wisdom; and a readiness to help others and share wealth and talent. Of particular value was the ability to make a boat that was stable and not likely to capsize, that would yield good fish catches, and that would avoid collisions with hippos. In the words of 51-year old Everist Mazoyo, a boatbuilder from Zinza:

"In the old days, not any person could be a boatbuilder. We were trained in many things: how to make a boat and how to avoid misfortunes, especially low fish catches, accidents, bad winds, storms and rituals against enemies. When we inherited this occupation, we were given 'mikoba' (a bag with powered tools)..."

"In the old days, not any person could be a boatbuilder. We were trained in many things: how to make a boat and how to avoid misfortunes, especially low fish catches, accidents, bad winds, storms and rituals against enemies. When we inherited this occupation, we were given *mikoba* (a bag with powered tools). It was not just about teaching how to make boats and how to use the plane, saw and sword. We were traditionally honoured with rituals and traditions by clan elders. We were given some herbs to rub on the boat and some for burning; we were taught *zindiko*—how to make the boat invulnerable against enemies and bad spirits, bad winds and storms—before we became true boatbuilders".

Throughout his life, the boatbuilder obeyed and carried out the bidding of his elders and clan spirits. From them he learnt the intricacies of tradition and ritual, including the use of medicinal plants, marinated ashes, old jewellery and charms (*hirizi*) in boat construction and launching. Making a new boat was like "preparing for a daughter's wedding". Elaborate ceremonies were held to which village elders, men, women, friends, neighbours and relatives came. A male goat was slaughtered and food and local brew made plentifully available. Offerings of food and fishing accessories were made to the boat owner. After the celebrations, the boat was launched but only if the boatbuilder permitted it. The launch was accompanied by a spiritual 'immunization' of the boat to make it safe for the boat owner, passengers and crew. Should the boat owner ignore this ritual and an accident befall his boat, the entire clan and family faced disgrace. Elders, however, did not allow such negligence, and minor ceremonies were arranged from time to time to avoid risks.

Different fishing communities in the Lake Victoria region have different sets of beliefs. People of the Zinza community believe that they are protected by their spiritual clan being, *O-Mswambwa,* and surrounded by their *mizimu ya koo*, a totality of clan spirits, souls and ghosts. *O-Mswamba* is worshiped at a sacred site located within the clan land, usually near a big tree, forest and shrubs. Prayers to *O-Mswambwa* are made, among other things, for better job prospects and family fortune, for conflict resolution and a good crop yield, and are usually accompanied by a goat sacrifice. However, the protector of the lake is *Mgasha-Mungu wa majini* (the God of water) to whom prayers are offered for fishing, launching new boats and for cleansing rituals involving fishing boats and crew.

Fishers of the Luo community consider a boat to be not an object but a living being, to which blame and responsibility can be assigned. Boatbuilding is accompanied by many rituals. Describing these, Ochallo-Ayayo writes that the ceremony that takes place before the launching of a boat is like the final ceremony called *riso* in a Luo marriage. The launching of the boat is the occasion for a major ceremony called *nyasi-yie*, in which the boat that is ready to be launched, is regarded like a married daughter coming home. During the *riso* celebration the grandfather presents gifts such as beads, earrings, plumes, bangles and *dol* (necklaces), objects believed to act as protective talismans. In Luo society, the boat may be named after a grandmother, a grandfather or a married daughter, whose spirit is believed to enter the boat to look after it. Each boat is believed to have its own *nyamrerwa* or priest. If a death takes place as a result of an accident on the lake, it is regarded as a killing of retribution, the slaying of a kinsman by another.

Boats are thought to be accompanied by boat spirits that are easily offended by certain behaviours such as smoking marijuana, abusive language and whistling. A boat spirit would be offended by menstruating women or by a person who enters the boat with shoes on. Customary practices are in keeping with beliefs related to misfortunes, locally known as *janaba*. For instance, a fisher is required to bathe before fishing or after sleeping with a woman, even his own wife. Likewise, a woman is supposed to bathe before stepping on a boat or after sleeping with a man.

Today, however, with the commercialization of the fisheries, only lip service is paid to these beliefs, which have come to have the status of 'fishing camp bye-laws'. As a result, community elders find themselves progressively marginalized from the fisheries, while non-fishers are able to gain easier entry.

In fact, some fishers object to traditional beliefs on the grounds that they are used merely to impose restrictions on individual behaviour. Indeed, traditions are fast disappearing.

Mzee Faida Ndayi, a Zinza, believes the problem to be the culture of modernity that is sweeping through his community:

"Our younger generation is spoiled by education, intermarriage and modernity, especially those who are married to educated wives from other tribes with different religious beliefs and traditions. In such homes, women have become the spokespersons of their families, and object to our cultural practices—something which is impossible for a village woman in our society. Now our sons have to negotiate with their wives to safeguard their marriages. But also, our sons are not able to follow tradition, and some of them don't believe in tradition anymore. Whatever they do, they link it with science from European books and not to their natural environment, and, as such, our rituals and traditional values are becoming history. Actually, what I am telling you is history too—the younger generation is totally broken! Our *O-Msambwa* get so mad, they don't answer our prayers any more. But when their families suffer as a result of losing a job or a demotion or the breakdown of marriage, sickness and political trouble, our sons come to us at once and say: "*Babu nisaidie nimekwama*!" ("Grandpa, I need your help; I am stuck!") Then we know exactly what they need."

The average age of the boatbuilder is declining and today's builder has little sense of the history of the lake. New entrants in the field come in from the *ng'ambo* (hinterland) and have no traditional knowledge. Says Andrea Simba: "Fictitious rituals are many and conducted haphazardly. Some performers are Maasais from dry lands who know neither how to swim nor what types of fish are found in this lake. But they earn good money by cheating our fishermen."

Clearly, customs and traditions are disappearing as commodification and credit markets give birth to new fishing relations. Fleets of new boats and other capital assets are pledged to fishing camps by fish buyers and their agents. In turn, fishers are obliged to supply fish continually. There is stiff competition, intense fishing, the tendency on the part of financial guarantors and fish suppliers to externalize the costs of exploitation and distribution onto others, loss of cultural norms, and the marginalization of the elderly fishers who earlier mediated clan and kinship relations and fishing customs.

Boat construction has shifted from local grounds to commercial fishing camps and factory yards. The involvement of clan elders is dying, and with it, clan/kinship relations. Given the high investment costs of commercial fishing, it is the financiers and equipment suppliers who command respect today. Moreover, migration and the relocation of camps to distant islands in search of good catch means that the new ties between people are based more on business than social relations and involve strict control, supervision and division of labour, exploitation, the fading of traditional customs and the rise of migratory quack healers and ritual performers.

Piracy, cheating and the theft of boats and fishing equipment have dramatically increased with the disappearance of traditional customs. Performing a boat ritual is risky because there is no guarantee that the next day the boat will not be stolen or used for theft, actions guaranteed to anger *O-Msambwa*. This high-risk environment makes elders cautious and reluctant to undertake customary rituals. Tradition provides the moral, ethical, social, economic and political underpinnings of a way of life, a customary code of conduct, and a framework to regulate the behaviour of individuals within the community. With the erosion of traditional norms and beliefs, the future of Lake Victoria's cultural norms and traditions is shaky, and more so, the organization of fishing. To what extent will these concerns be taken on board is anybody's guess. As governments become busy with 'modern' management perspectives that further strengthen fish trade and commodification, history is all but forgotten.

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PROFILE

Trifina Josephat: First among Equals

Trifina Josephat manages the Malehe landing site in Kyamalange, Tanzania

By **Rosemarie Nyigulila Mwaipopo** (ny_lila@yahoo.com), Lecturer, Dept. of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Dar es Salaam, and Member of ICSF

Amother of five, 42-year old Trifina Josephat is both an entrepreneur and a community leader. Although in her village, Kyamalange, in Tanzania's Kagera region, the role of women in fisheries is restricted to selling cooked food to fishers and fish traders along the beach, Trifina today owns a fishing vessel and manages a crew of four fishermen. Trifina is the Treasurer of the Beach Management Unit (BMU) in charge of managing the Malehe Landing Site in Kyamalange. A BMU is a community-based organization that is responsible for the management of local fish landing sites. This includes the collection of fish statistics and revenue, promoting environmental awareness, and mediating conflicts between local fishers and other stakeholders. The Malehe Landing Site is one of the numerous local landing sites along Lake Victoria, famous internationally for its Nile perch fisheries.

The Nile perch trade boomed in the years 2005-2007 as a result of economic liberalization and a consequent export-led demand. This period also intensified the competition among fish traders from neighbouring countries, particularly Uganda. Local fish traders began supplying fish to processing factories in Uganda, which paid about TShs500 to 600 (approx. US$0.5), more than what local traders were willing to pay. During these years, Trifina, sensing a lucrative opportunity, invested capital gained from selling coffee into building a canoe (*mtumbwi*) and buying fishing nets. She then employed four male *vibarua* (fishing labourers) on a sharing basis—50 per cent share of the catch to the crew, after adjusting for operational and maintenance costs. And so, Trifina launched her own fishing venture, one that has flourished over the years.

Trifina keeps close track of her vessel and crew. Though she does not enter the waters herself, she is known as a fisher because she controls her own production crew. One of the reasons for Trifina's success and the success of other entrepreneurs like her, was the prevalence of informal, trust-based exchange arrangements with neighboring traders—arrangements such as '*mali-kwa-mali*' (goods-by-goods) according to which fish is exchanged for an equivalent amount of material goods. A growing capital base soon allowed Trifina to buy another canoe and machine.

The intensification of the Nile perch fisheries has, however, led to illegal 'fencing'. Powerful vessel owners, who have more vessels and larger crew, fence off fishing grounds using force and violence, thus preventing entry by smaller vessels, like Trifina's. Big fishers, among them owners of 30 to 40 canoes, thus end up gaining monopoly over the fish trade. Recent times have also seen significant increase in piracy. In July 2010, Trifina's crew was attacked and one of her vessels seized by pirates. Luckily, the crew was rescued by other fishers from neighbouring fishing grounds. Trifina's efforts to follow up the case with local authorities and the police have remained unsuccessful. Trifina is, however, pleased with her growing success in the fish trade. She relates strategically to the fish market, selling the larger fish to traders or fish processing factories and disposing the smaller ones in the local market.

In the village, Trifina is regarded by some as a 'he-woman'—a woman with masculine traits. This is unfortunately the price that any strong woman who dares to swim against the tide ends up paying. But Trifina's strength also commands respect since very few women have had the courage to enter the fish trade. Today Trifina owns a modern house and ten heads of cattle, and her children study in good schools. Her strong will has also won her a leadership position in the BMU, as a result of which she stands shoulder-to-shoulder with the male fishers in the landing site—surely the first among equals.

Africa/ Tanzania

What next?

Women are constantly struggling to retain a role in the export-oriented fisheries of Lake Victoria

By Modesta Medard, Researcher at the Tanzania Fisheries Research Institute, Mwanza, Tanzania. This article is based on her M Phil dissertation.

Fisheries globalization is transforming the structure of markets and, with this, gender relationships. Social, political and economic processes now operate locally *and* globally. Changes in Lake Victoria's fisheries and fishing communities, from primary reliance on local markets, equipment and sources of capital, to reliance on export markets, external equipment suppliers and external sources of funding have affected, and have been mediated by, gender relations.

Lake Victoria, the second largest fresh water lake in the world, is shared between three countries—Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya.The lake accounts for an estimated 60 per cent of Tanzanian inland fish production. Fish and fisheries products from Lake Victoria are a significant source of food for Tanzania. They also contribute to the country's foreign exchange coffers. These fisheries provide income and employment to over 32,000 full-time fishers while an estimated 500,000 people are employed, formally and informally, in fisheries-related activities.

In the Kagera Region in northwest of Tanzania, historically fish was primarily consumed fresh, except for some sales to distant markets of sun-dried or smoked fish. The sexual division of labour varied from place to place, depending on the ethnic origin of the group. Women in the eastern portion of Lake Victoria were more likely to participate in fish trading, than those in the central and western portions. Local culture generally prohibited women from being away from their homes, limiting their ability to trade fish. The dominant means of transport were travel on foot and by bicycle tending to limit fish traders to local markets.

Since the 1980s, the Nile perch fishery has attracted tremendous investment. It has become one of the most important economic activities in the area. Industrial fish processing factories and fishing camps generate revenue for communities in the regions surrounding Lake Victoria. Recent research on the Tanzanian sector of Lake Victoria indicates some of the problems that small-scale fish traders and processors have faced in attempting to benefit from the export-oriented Nile perch fishery that developed in the 1980s.

Irrespective of gender, the two dominant problems they confront are those of transport and the availability of adequate funds. However, both quantitative and qualitative data indicate that most fish suppliers in the Nile perch fishing industry are men. In the year 2000, male suppliers made up 84 per cent of those providing raw material to the processing sector, compared to 16 per cent women suppliers.

In addition, men largely control the new technologies associated with the Nile perch fishery. Fish factory owners attribute the dominance of male fish suppliers over females to men having access to more of the capital needed to buy collector boats, provide seed money and hire labourers. Other factors they point to include the fact that men are better able to travel frequently, have better access to business collateral, and are reported to be more aggressive than women in persuading owners to grant them loans and in asking for advances for fish procurement payments.

There are important differences between men and women in terms of the way they engage in the Tanzanian Lake Victoria fish trade. Women, more than men, combine fish trade with other types of work. A majority of women (57 per cent) participate only in fish trading, but 43 per cent combine fish trading with other business activities. In contrast, on the Tanzanian side, 74 per cent of men participate only in fish trading while 24 per cent combine fish trading and other business. The high percentage of women who combine fish trading with other business as compared to their male counterparts may indicate women's greater vulnerability and greater income insecurity within fisheries-related activities.

In contrast to the fish supply sector, women made up a majority of those purchasing and processing the waste from the fish plants in the first three years of factory development in Tanzania. Nile perch fish frames (skeletons), locally known as *punk*, were considered waste and factories had to pay to dispose of them. To eliminate this cost, factories began selling them to local processors. Women were the first group to look for Nile perch by-products in factory doorways. This business started in 1993, one year after fish processing firms invested in Tanzania. A study carried out in *punk* processing camps indicated that 70 per cent of *punk* dealers were women.

In six operational Nile perch processing industries on the Tanzanian side of the lake, about 67 per cent of those buying and utilizing by-products from the fish processing industries were women. The women collected fish frames in troughs, baskets, hand drawn carts, and wheelbarrows and took them to the processing camps.

By 1997, 4 to 7 tons of fresh fish frames cost Tshs. 60,000-90,000.0 (US $75-112.50) wholesale. After processing (smoking and sun drying), the processed *punk* could be sold for Tshs. 100,000-120,000.00 (US $125-150). Single and married women used the revenue from this activity to build houses, feed their families, buy clothing, pay school fees and for medical care.

Over time, however, the Nile perch processing factories improved their filleting process so that no meat content was left on the frames. This meant the *punk* community could not get enough fish frames for human consumption. In response, some women started to grind *punkies* in locally made mortars and feed them to their chickens.

Additional, more recent changes in this sector have further eroded the capacity of these women to generate livelihoods from fish frames. In 1996/97 processed *punk* for animal feed was commercialized resulting in new investments in local fishmeal factories. The major markets for processed fish frames were Shinyanga, Tabora, Dodoma, Morogoro, Singida, Mwanza, Mara and in some parts of Kagera region. The main markets for fishmeal products were Dar Es Salaam, Arusha, Mwanza, Morogoro, Dodoma and neighbouring countries such as Zambia and Kenya.

In 1998, higher standards for hygiene in fish processing required by European Union export requirements encouraged Nile perch factory owners to seek wholesale buyers for their by-products. This helped ensure the factory doorways would be quickly cleared and reduced the risk of both human and by-product waste congestion. However, when the factory owners started selling their fish frames to wholesalers, many women were forced out of the trade. Most could not compete with the men buying these products for animal feed as well as human consumption. The multiple demand led to high procurement costs which women could not manage.

The strong export orientation of the Nile perch industry and limited opportunities for women to derive employment and incomes from the sector have encouraged some to focus on purchasing juvenile Nile perch harvested in illegal gear. The minimum size for legally harvested Nile perch is half a kilogram. Purchasing this fish requires access to sufficient capital to compete with the factory agents, the main buyers of this fish type. These factory agents are not allowed to purchase juvenile Nile perch of less than half a kilogram.

Because legally harvested fish has become more expensive for the small traders who serve the local markets, because small fish is cheaper, and because falling incomes among local consumers limit the price they can pay for fish, the women traders have resorted to buying fish harvested in illegal, small-mesh gear to sell to industrial fish collectors.

However, marketing this fish provides a precarious source of income for small traders. Fish less than half a kilogram caught in beach seines and undersized gillnets may be sold to industrial agents because they can offer higher prices.

Some women fish traders have resorted to staying in the beach seine fishing camps at night so that they can get priority access to the available catch. Others have dropped out of the fish trade and moved to trading in other goods. If illegal gear is eliminated, the surviving women traders and processors could lose their access to fish.

Globalization has opened up new opportunities for some women but it has also undermined many women's economic independence and increased the challenges

they face in supporting themselves and their families. It has done this by contributing to environmental change, undermining their access to fish for processing and trading, enhancing competition and theft within fishing and trading, and ghettoising women in poorer paid occupations within industrial fish processing as contingent, vulnerable workers.

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Africa/ Tanzania

Women are Capable

Participation of women in the planning stages of fishery projects along the coastal region of Tanzania, has led to the success of these projects

This piece, by Catherine Chando, is based on her Master's thesis titled *Gender Roles in Fishery Planning and Projects: A case study of coastal region in Tanzania* completed in 2002

As a civil servant working in the fisheries bureaucracy and as a Master's student in fisheries management, I have often wondered why women's position in fisheries seems to be so important within the household economy and so marginal in fisheries politics. Their contributions to industry output are poorly registered and recognized. Women have been identified as producers, assistants to fishermen, processors—predominantly involved in post-harvest activities—traders, and prominent actors in activities that are not directly related to fisheries but are essential for family and community welfare. However, the focus on the work of men very often overshadows the economic role of women in fishing communities. This leads to a relative neglect of their needs and interests. Fisheries policies and programmes have, as a consequence, focused mainly on the needs and interests of men, ignoring the fact that women are engaged in fisheries.

Interested as I am in gender aspects of fisheries, I wanted to take a closer look at women's participation in project planning. I consider such participation as an important aspect of women's empowerment. Participation in the planning process gives women an opportunity to influence aims and strategies and to discuss different alternatives given their situation.

This article focuses on the roles played by women in the planning of fisheries projects in the coastal region of Tanzania, more specifically in the districts of Bagamoyo and Mafia.

I visited some fisheries projects in the Bagamoyo area and in Mafia Island. In the Bagamoyo projects, both women and men were not involved in the planning process; the projects were initiated and planned from outside—by the staff of the fisheries department, the community development officer, or by a seaweed farming company—so I will leave out this example.

The project in Mafia Island Marine Park (MIMP) represents, in many ways, a contrast to many projects I know. At Mafia women are now engaged in seaweed farming, factory work and shell collection. In this way they have shown that it is possible to find alternatives to the dynamite fishing that male fishers had been engaged in, almost ruining fish stocks in the process. The government and communities have worked together to counter the practice of dynamiting and to safeguard biodiversity.

The big difference here was women's involvement in the planning process. From the very beginning the ideology and the structure of the project included women. They were included at the national level when planning for the Park was initiated. When the plans for the Park were elaborated, they were members of the staff and were represented in committees and boards. In addition, there were also positions in the village that favoured women, for example, development officers and gender officer. Women were also called upon as community members to participate in the planning meetings initiated in each village.

Involvement in planning does not mean that all women participate. But it gives them a chance to come up with their priorities and strategies at an early stage. If they want to, they can use this opportunity in their favour. This means that women's inclusion from the very beginning of a project is of great importance.

The example from Mafia shows that, through a project, women in fishing communities can play an important role in sustainable management of resources. The projects at Mafia managed to mobilize women; they were leaders of the groups and they were active participants. The success in stopping the practice of dynamiting could also be due to women's involvement in meetings planning for the establishment of the park—one could say that discussion /planning started at the household level. This was a positive outcome in the villages of Jibondo and Juani in Mafia.

A closer observation of women's participation shows that women were more active and easier to mobilize in the projects compared to the men, and that a majority of the groups comprised women.

I also observed that:

- Women were participating in income generating activities outside fisheries and were contributing to their family incomes from the profits coming out of their group activities.
- Women, and some men, acquired and developed skills, particularly in conservation, by practicing seaweed farming.
- Women from villages in the two districts studied, exerted some influence on women's groups in neighbouring villages directly benefited by these projects.
- The women, having gained a better socio-economic status, found it easier to share their own experiences and learnings with the rest of the women and men. They thus motivated others, particularly men, to participate in group activities.

Lesson learned and recommendations

When women participated from day one in formulating the aims of the project—including, for example, increasing women's incomes, enabling them to make a better living, especially for their households—they managed to create a female orientation already in the planning phase. This female orientation seems to have impacted on the implementation and the activities carried out under the project, which in some cases also resulted in social change.

My findings also showed that there were an interrelation between participation in the planning process and level of education. At Mafia many women had comparatively higher levels of education.

The Mafia projects gave women experience in project planning, decision-making and in collaborating with external partners. In this way they have obtained knowledge and skills that might not only give them better economic living conditions, but also enable them to take care of their fisheries resources in a better way. They have also developed skills that can enable them to initiate new projects and take control over their own lives.

The fact that women are able to plan their own projects, therefore, seems to be an important factor that empowers women. The best results were seen in Mafia where women were brought into planning positions. Women held job positions aimed at assisting women to progress. The organizational structure of the Mafia Island Marine Park (MIMP), for example, created chances for women to be present at all phases of planning and implementation. The position of the gender officer at the park created a greater awareness, and men in the island were able to accept the mobility of their wives beyond their households, in a context where, given the prevailing Arabic culture, women tend to be confined to the household.

My experience from Mafia area is that if women are more involved in planning and leadership, problems of both women and men of many fishing communities can be solved.

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Film/ Africa

Fishers of Dar

A film on fisheries in Tanzania by Lina Fruzzetti, Akos Ostor and Stephen Ross

Fishers of Dar explores the continuity and integrity of traditional fishing practices in contemporary Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Dar es Salaam is a metropolis of three million people, yet the city's demand for fish is entirely met by equipment and methods practiced there for centuries.

The film takes the viewer to the city harbour's pier and fish market and to a small fishing community nearby. The film shows the hundreds of people who make a living in the process, before the fish reaches the customer. The story begins before dawn, with small sailboats and bigger diesel-powered boats leaving for fishing grounds. We see fishermen and women, boat builders, boat crews, auctioneers, labourers and vendors. Not least are the women who come with buckets, buy and clean small fish and go home by bus to sell fried fish in the hundreds of smaller markets of the city. Recently the market was demolished to provide for expansion of the harbour. The age old process continues but under difficult new conditions. 37 min. Sale $250. For more information see:

http://www.filmakers.com/indivs/FishersDar.htm