

# FACT SHEET

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women's inclusion in Kenya's aquaculture sector

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## Introduction

- ❖ The fisheries and aquaculture sector contribute 0.8 per cent to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), providing direct jobs to more than 500,000 people and supporting two million others indirectly, according to statistics.
- ❖ The Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI) in its reports shows men and women are actively engaged in the enterprise. Although women are in all key nodes of the aquaculture value chain, their involvement – other than processing, selling or marketing – is 32 per cent against men at 68 per cent.
- ❖ The big question remains: With immense growth in aquaculture, why have women's opportunities failed to keep pace with the rapid growth of the sector? What are the avenues for achieving equality and women's empowerment in aquaculture?

## Teething challenges

- According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), women globally are engaged in aquaculture in various ways, accounting for up to 70 per cent of people involved in the sector. They drive processing and marketing, and farm nutrient-dense fish which contribute to better incomes and food security for families and communities.
- Women are household managers and primary caregivers. They make decisions that lead to the wellbeing of households and reduced malnutrition. However, they often get little benefits due to gender disparities in social, cultural and economic spheres. In aquaculture, they are yet to get the full benefits.
- Invisibility of women's roles in aquaculture statistics and the negative impacts of 'genderblind' policies, predispose them to discrimination and marginalization within the sector. Most data collection systems have failed to capture their actual contributions to employment, production and consumption in aquaculture.
- Currently, few studies have explored the livelihood constraints of women and men in aquaculture. These gender-based constraints mean women's voices and their vast contributions are under-acknowledged and unrecognised. The policy agenda has often given priority to the production node, where men predominate, leaving processing and marketing activities where women play key roles.
- There is considerable empirical evidence of women's serious disadvantages in access to aquaculture production resources, their lack of control of the products of their labour, incomes from sales and their low representation in professional or community-based aquaculture organisations. This in addition to lack of access to financing for equipment or feed, training or extension programmes.
- Most women fish retailers face greater economic barriers and generate smaller financial returns than men retailers despite their crucial contributions to the aquaculture industry, livelihoods and nutrition. Moreover, women face constraints associated with making key decisions regarding factors of production and mobility.
- Despite positive changes such as women's group aquaculture enterprises, they still remain disadvantaged throughout the fish value chain with their potential unrealised. Failing to address gender-specific constraints to improving production and productivity has resulted in massive losses to the aquaculture sector in terms of production and income, as well as to household food security and nutrition, particularly for the poor.

## Equality and aquaculture

- Gender is important because men and women often perform different tasks within fish value chains, and have different assets, skills, experience, knowledge and decision-making roles. Their complementary roles revolve around production, transport and marketing. Women contribution is significant, though most of their work goes unpaid. Providing them with more access to factors of production and abolishing discriminatory norms that participation and benefits will increase aquaculture production, sustainable development and social wellbeing of everyone.
- According to FAO, if women were to use the same level of resources as men on the land they farm, agricultural output in developing countries would increase by between 2.5 per cent and 4 per cent. This would cut the number of undernourished people by between 12 and 17 per cent globally. This means that in order to achieve holistic development, the link between gender equity and social and economic growth should be observed.

## Removing inequalities

- Eliminating gender inequalities in aquaculture through women's empowerment will benefit the economy globally. Policy-makers and other stakeholders are beginning to recognize this, which is indeed promising for the future of the sector, food security and women in aquaculture.
- The best place to start is education, advocacy, and communication and having sex-disaggregated data to help inform the creation of gender-sensitive policies and programmes. Expanding our understanding on gender and identifying opportunities to address inequalities will go a long way in ensuring opportunities created by the government and other initiatives provide women with access to services and resources and support their participation in decision making. This will work towards achieving the 40:30:30 rule on gender participation.
- Shifts in norms and behaviours, and different skills are needed in research and development organizations to embody equality and promote institutional change towards diversity and gender equality. Stakeholders should unite to address how to translate this approach into actual research and development practice by conducting a pilot study to understand gender dynamics and norms, and laying a foundation for the gender-transformative approach. This will be key in identifying critical issues and ways of conceptualizing and assessing such change.
- Up-scaling women's contributions by recognising their knowledge, investing in labour-saving technologies in processing and marketing while training on the latest innovations, best practice and sustainable management of aquatic resources is key. Aquaculture is a capital-intensive enterprise, and most women lack the capital to invest. There is need to reach out to government funds like the Women Enterprise Fund and Youth Development Enterprise Funds to give women loans to support aquaculture ventures.

## Pulling together

- Women and men should work together to explore and care for aquatic resources. Eliminating inequalities and promoting gender equality will ensure different behaviours, aspirations, and needs of women and men are considered, valued, and favoured equally, thus leading to better nutrition and food security.
- Further research will provide government, policy-makers, researchers and other stakeholders involved in the aquaculture sector with actionable options to address gender barriers and promote growth of aquaculture without leaving women behind. Coordinated efforts will address the issues and realize women's lost potential. Evidence of the gender gap in aquaculture and the gains that could be achieved by closing these gaps should be clearly captured and presented.

