

Gender in fisheries in the times of sustainable development goals

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Sciences and Arts for Sustainability asbl



What is the challenge of this session?

In 2002, a group of scientists carried out a meta-analysis of case studies from four continents to ask the question of

1. the role of women in fisheries and aquaculture and
2. whether women could contribute to the transition towards sustainability, including through restoration of lost productivity, given the already difficult state of global marine and freshwater resources then.

A historical note highlighted the sacred role of women in many past traditional societies.

17 detailed case studies were used in the analysis of modern circumstances

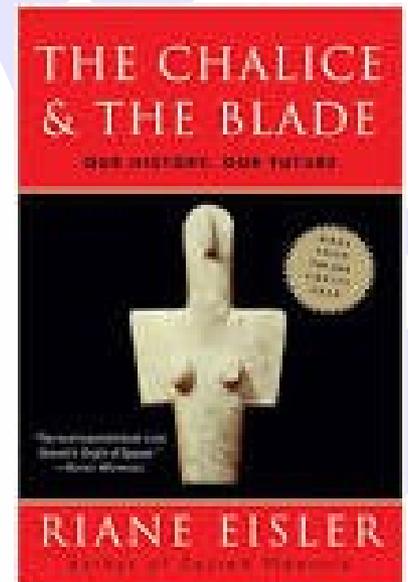




Ancestral conditions

The two principal roles of women – the biological and social role of reproduction and holding the family together and the economic role of contributing to income and foodsecurity – are intertwined.

The historical record shows that the female realm was closely associated with nature conservation and sustainable use in several ancient societies where women had specific rights over conservation spaces, e.g. in the Mediterranean and the Pacific, usually supported by religious or mystical beliefs surrounding the Earth Goddess, sacred groves, and the first marine protected areas of humanity (Collet, pers.comm.; Eisler, 1988).





Ancestral conditions (2)

Collet (1992) gives a detailed account of the strong symbolic power of women in fishing economies, their role in traditional whale hunting in **North America** and the **Mediterranean** swordfish fishery in places looking back on four millennia of uninterrupted human settlement and maritime orientation.

His studies into the conservation role of women in many **Pacific islands** in the past also reveal that the powerful magic women used to exercise is progressively being lost.

Hochet-Kibongui observed similar trends in rural societies in **Africa**.



(Papua New Guinea, Mecki Kronen)



Women associated with restraint

The intention is not to romanticise the role of women in conservation. Many of the systems, which today are interpreted as signifying a conservation ethos (no fishing in certain areas, on certain days, banning of certain type of gear, etc.), may actually have emerged due to social reasons or as mechanisms to reduce social conflict.

The low level of technology available and the limited demand in earlier times (both for demographic and marketing reasons) would have ensured that resources were more or less sustainably harvested.

Nevertheless, the evidence points clearly towards a **different relationship with nature of those societies** and the association of women with forms of restraint.



Case studies

- 2 from Spain (Canary Islands – Gloria Cabrera Socorro, Galicia – Begoña Marugán Pintos)
- 1 from France (Brittany – Katia Frangoudes)
- 1 from rural southern Nigeria (Stella Williams et al.)
- 1 from Sierra Leone (Patience B. Browne)
- 1 from Lake Victoria (Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda – Modesta Medard, Kim Geheb)
- 2 from Brazil (Alpina Begossi, Maria A. Gasalla)
- 1 from Mexico (Margarita Velazquez)
- 1 from Canada (Newfoundland, Labrador – Brenda Grzetic)
- 2 from Pacific islands (Tonga, Fiji - Mecki Kronen, Aliti Vunisea)
- Coastal fisheries Asia (Chandrika Sharma)
- Mekong Region (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Vietnam – Kathleen I. Matics)



What modern patterns did we find?

Women's labour (and role as entrepreneurs and carriers of local culture) tends to

- be **unrecognised**, often unpaid, losing social status
- cloud the economic signals of increasing resource rarefaction – act as cross-subsidy.
- have lost its embeddedness in traditional belief systems of giving back to nature and exercise restraint, as these cultural norms have been progressively eroded.

Where social recognition is achieved through e.g. enforcement of modern equal opportunity legislation – especially when combined with access to formal education and training - women **regain capabilities for enhanced social organisation and leadership.**

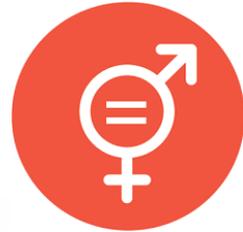
This can lead to significant contributions to the restoration of natural resources.



>15 years on, is it any better?

SDG 5 focuses on gender equity and equitability

SDG 14.b demands access of SSF to resources, SSF Guidelines have a specific gender dimension



SDG 4 demands the right to education, ... **other SDGs**

Recognition of the interconnectedness of the SDG is progress and e.g. girls' education is advancing

Recent publications on women / gender in fisheries and aquaculture echo many of the findings from the 2002 workshop, nevertheless it appears that at least **awareness is increasing** - indication: Google scholar for "gender in fisheries and aquaculture" generates

- 4,880 entries between 1950 and 2000,
- 16,600 between 2001 and 2019
- 14,000 since 2015 (adoption of SDGs).



What to focus on?

- Recent empirical evidence (gender lens) of changes in social status, e.g. in the light of further globalised markets
- Women a force for restoring lost productivity of marine and freshwater ecosystems?
- How to promote overcoming continued discrimination and marginalisation?
- How to mend often broken relations between men and women along value chains for enhanced capacity for both genders to operate sustainably and successfully?
- What else?





SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

1 NO POVERTY 	2 ZERO HUNGER 	3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING 	4 QUALITY EDUCATION 	5 GENDER EQUALITY 	6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION
7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY 	8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH 	9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE 	10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES 	11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES 	12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION
13 CLIMATE ACTION 	14 LIFE BELOW WATER 	15 LIFE ON LAND 	16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS 	17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS 	 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS