



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

A woman in a light blue polo shirt and a red patterned wrap is kneeling in front of a brick wall. She is carefully arranging a large quantity of small, silver fish on a wooden rack. The rack is supported by several large, dark, rectangular bricks. The background is a rustic, reddish-brown brick wall. The woman has a focused expression and is wearing several thin bangles on her left wrist.

**STRENGTHENING GENDER-RESPONSIVE  
CLIMATE POLICIES AND ACTIONS**

**IN AQUACULTURE AND FISHERIES**



## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Promote women's leadership and youth inclusion in fisheries, aquaculture, and management of coastal resources to achieve sustainability and conservation results.
- 2 Recognize and invest in women's critical roles as agents of change to trigger meaningful climate actions and increase women's capacity to respond to rapid- and slow-onset events that impact aquaculture and fisheries.
- 3 Couple awareness-raising interventions with ecological strategies to control the supply of fish and thereby reduce fishermen's leverage on women, including fish for sex.
- 4 Support the mobilization of women and youth in communities to facilitate the ecological management of fisheries and wetlands (including plastic management), increasing access to climate information, and using traditional knowledge to develop adaptation strategies.
- 5 International climate finance mechanisms, national government ministries, and research institutions should allocate more funds to replicate successful gender-responsive and transformative projects and identify entry points to mainstream gender considerations into aquaculture and fisheries policies.

# 1

## INTRODUCTION

Around the world, women make up **19 percent** of the workforce in aquaculture, **12 percent** of the workforce in capture fisheries, and about half of those engaged in small-scale fisheries (SSFs).



Women perform essential work throughout aquaculture and fisheries, yet their contributions are often overlooked and unrecognized in national statistics, policies, and development interventions. Women remain under-represented in or excluded from formal governance processes and have limited say in decision-making.

Discriminatory norms, customs, laws, and regulatory mechanisms perpetuate gender inequalities in both aquaculture and fisheries, limiting women's participation in decision-making, rights, access, and control over resources, access to services, markets, and decent work, and an uneven allocation of benefits, with women's labour often viewed as an extension of domestic responsibility.

Climate variability and change, particularly in regions that are highly dependent on aquaculture and fisheries (Oceania, Africa, Asia, Small Island Developing States), are exacerbating gender inequalities.

Women are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change due to their lack of control over income-generating activities, lower decision-making power, mobility and access to land and resources like credit. Effective adaptation, including proper fisheries management and wetland conservation, access to climate information, and inclusion of traditional knowledge, must consider the differing needs and skills of women and men, as well as marginalized groups. Knowledge on gender roles and dynamics is important to guide adaptation strategies.

This brief showcases promising research and innovation, particularly from countries engaged through the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Flexible Multi-Partner Mechanism (FMM) 149 project. Uganda, Belize and Samoa are highlighted as examples to inform policymakers, guide gender-responsive investments, policies, and strategies in countries' work in response to climate change.

## 2 LOCAL RESEARCH AND ACTIONS

### ● ● ● CASE STUDY: UGANDA

*The role of gender in improving adaptation to climate change among small-scale fishers in Lake Wamala, Uganda*

#### BACKGROUND

Lake Wamala in central Uganda is an important source of fish and livelihoods for riparian and fishing communities. With the introduction of three tilapia species in 1956, the lake's fish yields first increased significantly, but fluctuated and went down again due to overexploitation and climate-related factors. In 2009, Lake Wamala was classified by the United Nations Environment Programme as a major environmental change hotspot in Africa. The lake continues to experience reduced water levels and surface area, from encroachment and agricultural activities on the lake's buffer zone, which in turn influence fish catches and the coping strategies of local communities. Many small-scale fishers turn to alternative livelihoods, but more support is needed to ensure these are climate-smart, gender-responsive and sustainable.

#### FINDINGS

A study by Uganda's National Fisheries Resources Research Institute (NaFIRRI) and Makerere University in 2017 uncovered the gender roles and dynamics among small-scale fishers in Lake Wamala, highlighting the importance of integrating gender considerations into adaptation planning.

Acknowledging the different roles men and women play is crucial to enhance capacities as well as to promote positive structural changes both at both the household and the community levels. Increasing the participation of women in income-generating activities as well tapping into their community mobilization expertise and greater awareness of agriculture-related climate-smart practices can build their resilience due to increased household income and food security.



**Women reported** that they spent most of their income on household needs.



**Men dominated** fishing activities, fish processing and fish trading.



Exploit men's productive activities that benefit the household, **reducing time constraints on women.**

## ● ● ● CASE STUDY: BELIZE

### ***Gender-responsive climate action through coral reef rehabilitation and sustainable management: Fragments of Hope***

#### BACKGROUND

Approximately six million fisherfolk around the world derive their livelihoods from coral reefs, particularly in the developing world.

**In Belize, approximately 50 percent of the population base their livelihoods in reef-related fishing and tourism.**

Fragments of Hope is a not-for-profit community-based organization in Placencia, Belize, focusing on reef restoration and sustainable management of habitats. It was founded by Lisa Carne, Belize's first female diving instructor. The organization pioneered reef replenishment activities in Belize using genetically robust, diverse and climate-resilient corals and is currently the only organization in Belize conducting reef restoration work.

In 2009, Fragments of Hope established six *in situ* nursery sites, and today, there are over 23 nurseries and over 100 000 corals out-planted in more than 10 different locations throughout Belize. The organization also operates mangrove reforestation activities to stabilize the coastline and restore the mangrove habitat. Mangroves and coral reefs together form a barrier that protects shorelines, avoiding damage and loss from climate-related impacts on coastal communities.

#### FINDINGS

The organization offers women subsidized training programmes to promote their participation in coral reef restoration. She has overcome major cultural barriers in the process, and one of the organization's main activities is to teach small-scale fishers – particularly women and girls – to swim, grow coral, and dive to replant reefs. Approximately half of the trained diving instructors at Fragments of Hope are female and earn three times more than Belize's minimum wage. Doing so has empowered women to take meaningful climate action by preserving an important marine ecosystem and habitat.



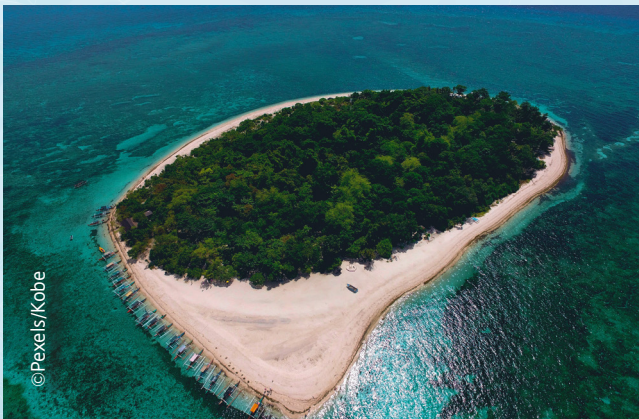
## ● ● ● CASE STUDY: SAMOA

### *Potential for strengthening gender-responsive fisheries and aquaculture development in government commitments and policy frameworks*

#### BACKGROUND

Samoa is a Polynesian island country in the Pacific Ocean prone to natural disasters, namely earthquakes and tropical cyclones. Extreme weather and climate change impact Samoa's marine environment, which is a crucial source of livelihoods and food security. As such, activities that promote the sustainable and climate-resilient use of fisheries and marine resources are imperative.

Women in Samoa have an important role to play in ensuring the productivity and efficiency of agricultural and fisheries value chains (FAO, 2019). As the Samoan agricultural sector becomes more market-oriented, there is an important need to formally recognize women as key stakeholders and systematically integrate gender-responsive approaches in national agricultural policies and actions (FAO, 2019).



#### FINDINGS

A recent report developed by the Pacific Community (SPC) in Samoa provides an analysis of government commitments and policy frameworks that can support or constrain gender-responsive fisheries and aquaculture development. The report identified potential entry points for strengthening gender-responsive policies, especially the need to create an enabling environment within government ministries, including the Ministry of Agriculture. These criteria included commitment at leadership level, accountability mechanisms and systems to enforce commitments to gender mainstreaming, and technical capacity to identify and address gender issues.

In addition to creating an organizational culture that sees the inclusion of women in decision-making and training as a normal and required way of working, the report highlighted the need for division-by-division training to (1) support gender analysis in the context of fisheries and aquaculture; (2) develop gender indicators linked to all technical outcomes in Fisheries Division plans; and (3) document information and lessons about how gender roles and divisions of labour are relevant to more effective implementation of fisheries objectives.

## ● ● ● ABOUT THE FMM149 PROGRAMME

The objective of the FMM 149 programme, also known as the Scaling up implementation of the Enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender and its Gender Action Plan (Enhanced GAP) in Agriculture and the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture (KJWA) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), is to promote more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems, while contributing to poverty reduction, food security and nutrition, achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

The Gender Action Plan (GAP) of the Lima work programme recognizes the need for women to be represented in all aspects of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process. Countries under this subprogramme develop gender-responsive climate policies and actions in agriculture and support gender balance and women's leadership at national, regional, and global levels, specifically in the UNFCCC. Support will be given to countries to meet their gender targets established in the UNFCCC Lima work programme.

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