



# Empowering Women Clam Collectors in Tunisia



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# Description of the fisheries

- 17 production sites are primarily concentrated in two major coastal areas – Gabès and Sfax
- more than 4 000 women–
- average annual production of 700 tons mostly directed for export.



# Management of the fisheries

- As part of a policy of gradual State withdrawal and to overcome numerous health, administrative and organizational challenges and build momentum around beach clam fisheries, clam development and harvesting groups (GDP) have been set up in production areas.
- These GDP are responsible for the management of the fishery, for handing out licenses, and for the control of the water quality (sanitary measures).
- These GDPs were supposed to be community driven, but no women were involved in the GDPs

# Rights-based approach: allocation and characteristics

- At present, the GDP gives out licenses to female collectors.
- Each women is not allowed to collect more than 5 kg per day.
- clam collection is allowed only from October to May, while during the remaining months the areas are closed.
- The GDP has also created a zoning, with closed areas which are rotating, in order to give some recovery to an area.



## Challenges of system (pre FAO Project)

Women receive very low Price

Male transporters have a major say in the allocation of women and take away a lot of the economic benefits

Women are not involved in GDP





## Challenges

- Low visibility of the “profession”  
Little interest, no extension services →
- Precarious and difficult working conditions
- Vulnerability linked to seasonality and closing of fishing for sanitary reasons
- Members of the local fishery management entity (GDP) without being represented- although they account for 85% of resource users
- Taxes paid to but no access to any service from the GDP
- Marginalized
  - Fishing licenses kept by (male) transporters
- Weak bargaining power-Vulnerability
  - Representatives of depuration and export centres
  - transporters

## FAO Project

- strategic partnership with the private sector (Italian importer and Tunisian depuration plant)
- improve the women's income
- Organize women in associations
- fixed price set in advance
- mandatory cash payments are paid by onsite purchasers (representatives of the depuration centre) to the women collectors.



## Improving fishery sustainability

- With the premium price and the organization of the women, some resource protection mechanism could be put in place, using the existing organizations.
- The single female producers are now far more attentive to the minimum size and would be available to further management measures, implemented together with them.
- More involving the women in the GDPs, giving them a voice and also a management role in the organization.



## Lessons learned

- Long way
- Illiteracy and the lack of any form of guidance or training are the main reasons for exclusion of women from GDPs, together with the traditional gender roles
- Fair trade is a new way forward, creating a win win situation for the main players, but also for the environment
- ongrowing facilities, licensed to the female clam collectors, for both under sized clams and for razor clams,
- The involvement of the importer side in fair trade was difficult, but at the end the right way to go, in order to guarantee a better life to the women, in line with SDG 5, 12 and 14.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND  
ATTENTION!**