



Food and Agriculture
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Mapping women's small-scale fisheries organizations in Malawi: results from assessing current capacities, gaps and opportunities to strengthen women's organizations in the sector

Applying the handbook

in support of the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines
for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries
in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication

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Part A: Summary of present capacities and opportunities to strengthen women's small-scale fisheries organizations in Malawi

3

- › Overview of present organizational characteristics 3
- › Current strengths, capacity gaps and opportunities to strengthen women's small-scale fisheries organizations 3
- › Opportunities and proposed interventions to enhance the capacity of women's small-scale fisheries organizations 3

Part B: Results of the Women's SSF Mapping Assessment Survey in Malawi

7

- › Group location and structure 7
- › Group age and stage of activity 7
- › Rules 9
- › Group characteristics: size, gender and participation 10
- › Internal communication and meetings 11
- › Assets 11
- › Value chain activities 12
- › Post-harvest processing 14
- › Finances 14
- › Membership benefits, group strengths and barriers to success 15
- › External linkages 17
- › Participation in fisheries governance and access to extension services 18
- › Training 19
- › Greatest needs 20

Appendixes

- › Appendix 1. Methods 23

Acknowledgements

This work was undertaken as part of the FAO-Norad project "Empowering Women in Small-Scale Fisheries for Sustainable Food Systems" between 2020 and 2021, implemented in collaboration with the Department of Fisheries of Malawi. This report provides a descriptive analysis of survey data on mapping women's organizations working in small-scale fisheries and assessing their needs. Hillary Smith, FAO consultant, coordinated the study and prepared the report. Many other people were involved in the survey preparation, implementation, validation and reviewing the report, including Amenye Banda (FAO Malawi), Austin Bondo (FAO Malawi), Molly Ahern and Lena Westlund (FAO Headquarters), and Sabstone Unyolo (Department of Fisheries, Malawi), among others. We would also like to thank Sarah Pasetto for the language review and Jose Luis Castilla for completing the layout of this report.

Overview

To support sustainable food systems and nutrition in sub-Saharan Africa, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) provided funding to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to support project activities in five countries – Ghana, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Uganda, and United Republic of Tanzania – with a focus on strengthening women's roles in post-harvest processing and trade. Around the world, women perform essential work throughout small-scale fisheries food systems, yet much of this work is overlooked. Where women are not seen or acknowledged as important actors in fish value chains, they remain underrepresented in or excluded from formal governance processes and have limited say in decision-making. This lack of visibility also hinders women's equal access to needed extension services and assets, such as credit and technology. As part of the FAO-NORAD project “Empowering women in small-scale fisheries for sustainable food systems”, the decision was made to focus on strengthening women's roles in small-scale fisheries value chains as a means to increase the quantity and quality of small fish for human consumption and trade. In addition to the focus on food security and nutrition, the project aimed to help women both individually and as members of small businesses, professional organizations and cooperatives to build and improve their skills and capacity to do their work. To attain these goals, it was determined that a baseline empirical assessment of the current landscape of organizations and their primary characteristics, capacities and needs was needed as a first step.

The focus on gender equality and women's fishing organizations in the FAO-NORAD project is in line with the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines). Gender equity and equality are core objectives and guiding principles of the SSF Guidelines. An entire thematic chapter (Chapter 8) in the SSF Guidelines is dedicated to this goal, as it outlines the right to organize and the need to support women's fishing organizations as a means to enhance women's access to and participation in governance, and to strengthen their position within fish value chains. This chapter also foregrounds the need for alternative evaluation systems, measures, and technologies appropriate to women's work in fisheries.

Through the FAO-NORAD project, survey data was used to “map” women's organizations and assess their present capacities and needs in the small-scale fisheries sector. Data collection for this study (herein referred to as the Women's SSF Mapping Assessment) focused on three districts along Lake Malawi: Karonga in the Northern region, Salima in the Central region, and Mangochi in the Southern region. Across these three districts, a total of 54 surveys were collected between 18 September and 30 October 2020 (for a full overview of the study methods, see Appendix 1). The results of this study and related recommendations for capacity enhancement activities were later validated through a workshop held on 24 March 2021, by representatives from the central government (Ministry of Fisheries), academia, NGOs, district-level officials, extension officers, and women from the small-scale fisheries sector.

Part A: Summary of present capacities and opportunities to strengthen women's small-scale fisheries organizations in Malawi

Overview of present organizational characteristics

Women's small-scale fisheries groups in Malawi are relatively young and take a variety of organizational forms, including savings groups, associations, cooperatives, community-based organizations (CBOs), and subcommittees of local Beach Village Committees (BVCs). Groups currently have good governance structures and procedures in place and meet regularly, but only one-third are formally registered. Most groups were formed on their own initiative (e.g. without outside support) with the common objectives of improving their livelihoods, supporting their collective social welfare, and saving money and growing their capital.

Current strengths, capacity gaps and opportunities to strengthen women's small-scale fisheries organizations

STRENGTHS: Groups currently exhibit many strengths and appear to have high potential to support women's fishing enterprises and participation in governance. Nearly all groups have basic administrative structures, democratic rule-making procedures and regular leadership changeovers at present. Positive internal dynamics are a common strength, with good group cohesion, shared objectives, high rates of participation, and good information-sharing procedures. Groups feel they have been relatively successful at achieving their objectives and at applying new knowledge they have gained through technical training. Some groups are already participating in environmental management activities and are helping to enforce sustainable fishing practices and regulations. Many have access to improved technologies including raised drying racks, and some have access to fishing gear.

CAPACITY GAPS: Currently, many groups need assistance in the process of formalizing their group, expanding their membership, or becoming registered (especially associations, cooperatives and CBOs). Few groups have received external financial support and less than one-half have received technical training to date. However, groups have already shown that they are able to internalize new information learned (e.g. apply knowledge from training and put it into practice) and have good internal group dynamics and democratic procedures in place, which can serve as a strong foundation to build on and enhance their capacities through external support.

Opportunities and proposed interventions to enhance the capacity of women's small-scale fisheries organizations

In this section, we outline six multi-part interventions to strengthen women's small-scale fisheries groups in Malawi. These proposed interventions were developed based on analysis of the empirical survey results (presented in full in Part B) of the Women's SSF Mapping Assessment. Once developed, the recommendations were shared with stakeholders and women from the small-scale fisheries sector in Malawi at a workshop for validation: workshop participants provided their input on considerations for each activity, the priority level, and key partners. The proposed interventions below reflect their feedback.

- 1) **Formalize groups and enhance their current administrative capacities.**
 - a. Help newly formed groups **become registered and get bank accounts.**
 - i. *Feedback:* Facilitate formation where there currently are no groups. Strengthening Fisheries Officers' information sharing and data collection on group formation and registration would make up-to-date information more accessible. Especially at the Chikombe landing site, many groups need formalization. Support should also be provided to Mkama women (BVC).
 - ii. *Priority level:* High.
 - iii. *Partnerships:* Government (Fisheries Department), Malawi Confederation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (MCCCI) and commercial banks, BVCs and Village Development Committee (VDC)
 - b. Help groups expand their membership base where desired. Government officials could help **raise awareness about the presence and benefits of groups** through communication campaigns at landing sites.
 - i. *Feedback:* Ensure a favourable gender composition for women as groups grow in size. Some groups may need to explore restructuring as they grow. Empower BVC members to disseminate information.
 - ii. *Priority level:* High/medium
 - iii. *Partnerships:* Government (Fisheries Department)
 - c. **Coordinate across relevant ministries and levels of government** (e.g. district, national) where different types of groups are registered (e.g. CBOs, associations, cooperatives) to ensure coherence in the delivery of information and support within the government and with technical partners like FAO.
 - i. *Feedback:* Engage with local partners also implementing fisheries projects like Ripple Africa in Salima and others at the district and community level.
 - ii. *Priority level:* High
 - iii. *Partnerships:* Government, Restoring Fisheries for Sustainable Livelihoods in Lake Malawi (REFRESH), FAO
 - d. **Leadership training** would help groups – especially those that are newly formed – identify and achieve their short-, medium- and long-term plans. Training should cover group governance and functioning appropriate to their group structure (e.g. cooperatives, savings group, BVCs).
 - i. *Feedback:* Supporting group governance and leadership will also help groups strengthen their business and profits; exchange trips between groups should be supported as well.
 - ii. *Priority level:* High
 - iii. *Partnerships:* Government, NGOs
- 2) **Enhance access to needed assets and technologies.**
 - a. **Access to assets** such as raised drying racks, cold storage, dry storage, improved ovens, post-harvest equipment, engines and fishing gear could be enhanced through better access to grants, subsidies and soft loans. Alternatively, centres could be created where access to some of these technologies is made accessible to multiple groups.

- i. *Feedback:* This will help groups lower their production costs through asset ownership. Centres should be identified where these assets can be installed and made available for use by communities.
 - ii. *Priority level:* High
 - iii. *Partnerships:* Government, microfinance institutions, NGOs, REFRESH, African Development Bank (ADB)
- 3) **Provide training on business management, value addition, and natural resource management.**
 - a. **Training on post-harvest processing** (improved ovens, product quality and consistency) and strategies to reduce post-harvest losses are needed.
 - i. *Feedback:* This will help enhance quality of fish products.
 - ii. *Priority level:* High
 - iii. *Partnerships:* Government
 - b. **Training on business management and marketing** is needed.
 - i. *Feedback:* Most groups have basic knowledge and experience already, but training on new strategies could help.
 - ii. *Priority level:* Medium
 - iii. *Partnerships:* Government, other institutions such as Small and Medium Enterprises Development Institute (SMEDI) and MCCCCI
 - c. **Training on natural resource management, conservation and climate change** should be provided in accessible language and adapted to the work women are doing in the fishery sector.
 - i. *Feedback:* Ensure training is given in a language that is appropriate to the educational level and types of work women do. Many women's groups are already participating in patrols and environmental monitoring. This training could strengthen their ability to participate and provide this service to their communities and fisheries.
 - ii. *Priority level:* Medium
 - iii. *Partnerships:* Government, NGOs, FAO
- 4) **Enhance connectivity among local groups and link them to higher-level groups.**
 - a. **Facilitate learning exchanges** between groups (especially between younger groups and more established groups), ensuring that these are facilitated for groups of different types (e.g. cooperatives, associations, CBOs) so they learn from each other.
 - i. *Feedback:* Sharing best practices is a good opportunity, but groups need to operate for some time first to benefit from this.
 - ii. *Priority level:* High/medium
 - iii. *Partnerships:* Government, NGOs
 - b. **Connect local-level groups to a national umbrella group. Strengthen national umbrella groups** so that they can deliver needed information, services and functionality to connect groups in a way that is beneficial.
 - i. *Feedback:* This platform would strengthen existing groups.
 - ii. *Priority level:* High/medium

iii. *Partnerships:* Government, other institutions

5) **Improve access to external financial support.**

- a. Provide access to **soft loans** for groups to purchase equipment and expand their business.
 - i. *Feedback:* This is the main obstacle hindering groups.
 - ii. *Priority level:* High
 - iii. *Partnerships:* NGOs, microfinance institutions, commercial banks, other institutions
- b. Help groups **identify other source of external financial support** through NGOs, academia, microfinance institutions and other development partners.
 - i. *Feedback:* This will ensure that groups are targeted for support.
 - ii. *Priority level:* High
 - iii. *Partnerships:* Government, NGOs

6) **Improve government communication and support to groups.**

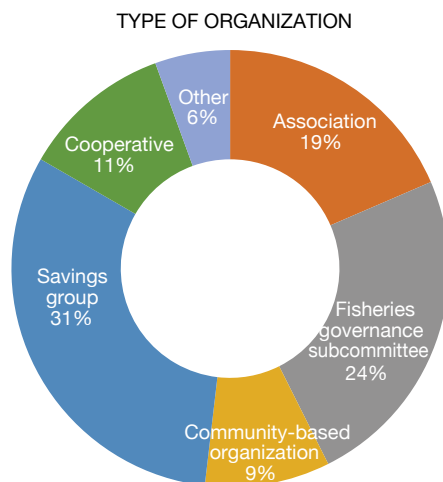
- a. **Raise awareness** within different branches of the government about the presence of different types of women's small-scale fisheries groups (e.g. CBOs, savings groups, cooperatives) and ensure they are **receiving government support through extension services, especially field visits and invitations to meetings and training events**. Groups want regular contact and visits from the government so they know they are listened to and supported.
 - i. *Feedback:* This will enhance support at the community level
 - ii. *Priority level:* High
 - iii. *Partnerships:* Government (Fisheries Department), radio programmes
- b. The government could play a role in improving market access through **training, fostering linkages to new markets, and providing information** to help groups diversify their market outlets.
 - i. *Feedback:* None
 - ii. *Priority level:* Medium/high
 - iii. *Partnerships:* Government, NGOs

Part B: Results of the Women's SSF Mapping Assessment Survey

Group location and structure

Nearly all women's small-scale fisheries organizations operate at the village level (98 percent), but organizations take a variety of forms (see Figure 1), including savings groups (31 percent), subcommittees of village fisheries governance bodies (e.g. BVCs – 24 percent), associations (19 percent) and cooperatives (11 percent). Around one-third of groups are registered at present (37 percent), typically with the Fisheries Department, leaving most groups (63 percent) yet to be formally registered as organizations with the government. Rates of registration vary by the type of group: nearly all BVC subcommittees are registered, and one-half of CBOs and cooperatives are registered, whereas other types of groups (e.g. associations, savings groups) have lower rates of formal registration. Nearly all groups have basic administrative structures and procedures in place, including an executive committee (98 percent), a constitution or by-laws (96 percent), meeting records or minutes (96 percent) and updated membership lists (96 percent). However, bank accounts are a less common feature (found in only 70 percent of groups). **There are opportunities to formalize groups and help them with the registration process, focusing on groups that identify as cooperatives, associations, savings groups and CBOs. Some groups also need assistance establishing bank accounts.**

Figure 1. Types of organizations that represent women in fisheries



Group age and stage of activity

Women's small-scale fisheries groups in Malawi vary in age, ranging from newly formed to a maximum of 24 years old. Average group age is 4 years and the average time between formation and formalization (e.g. registration) is a little over one year. Most groups were formed on their own initiative (e.g. self-formed – Figure 2), either by a group of like-minded community members (72 percent), by an individual community member (24 percent), or by breaking off from an existing fisheries group (11 percent). Outside help for group formation mostly came from the village fisheries

governance body (15 percent), an NGO (10 percent) or a development project (7 percent). The main objectives of groups varied (Table 1), with the most common being to improve household income (85 percent), enhance social welfare and solidarity among members (65 percent), collectively save money and pool capital (41 percent), participate in fisheries management (30 percent), improve access to fish (19 percent), and address environmental issues (17 percent) and gender equality (17 percent). The rate of success at meeting objectives varied, with two-thirds of groups reporting they have been somewhat successful (67 percent), but more groups reporting being successful (22 percent) than not successful (11 percent – Figure 3a).

However, looking at responses to this question by group type, CBOs, associations and cooperatives are more likely to consider their group unsuccessful at meeting their objectives (40 percent, 20 percent and 17 percent, respectively) – yet these same groups also report that they are still primarily focused on their formation or formalization as a group, which could explain their lower rates of perceived success. Across all group types, collective energy is primarily focused on meeting the group’s initial objectives (63 percent) while nearly one-third of groups are focused on their formation (30 percent), with few groups either inactive or focused on secondary objectives (Figure 3b). **Women’s small-scale fisheries groups in Malawi are young and primarily focused on achieving their primary objectives, but most groups see their progress relatively favourably. Many groups, particularly associations, CBOs and cooperatives, are still focused on their initial formation and could use support completing this initial phase so they can begin working towards meeting their group goals. More recently formed groups in particular would benefit from leadership training to help leaders develop short-, medium- and long-term plans to help lead their groups and make progress towards their goals, adapting and evolving those goals as their needs change.**

Figure 2. Different actors who initiated group formation (groups could choose more than one actor if applicable)

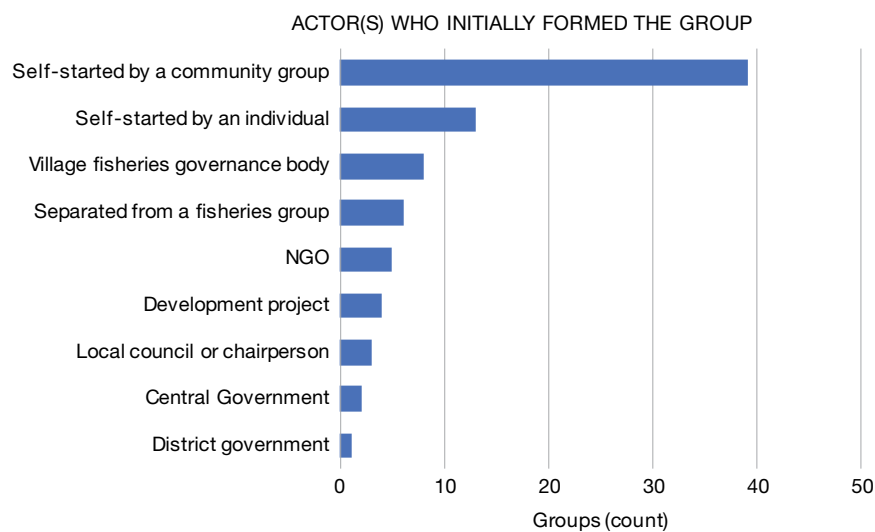
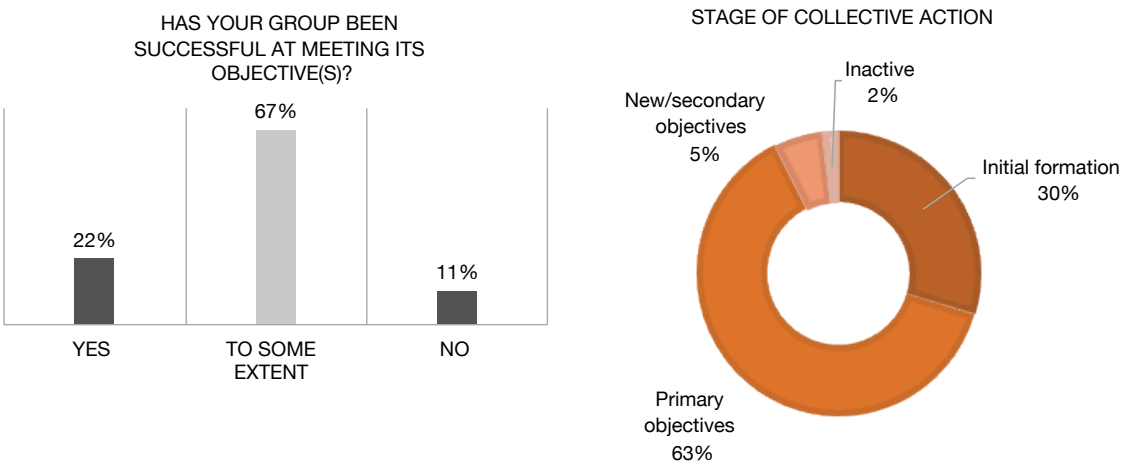


Table 1. Groups’ main purpose or organizational objectives

Main purpose/objective	Number of groups	Percentage of groups
Improving household income	46	85
Social welfare	35	65
Collective savings	22	41
Participation in formal fisheries management	16	30
Access to fish	10	19
Environmental issues	9	17
Gender equity	9	17
Expanding trade and market access	6	11
Greater visibility to the government	5	9
Learning new skills	3	6
Access to external financial support	3	6
Other	2	4
Access to workspace	1	2

Figure 3. Groups’ perceptions of their overall progress towards their objectives (a) and the primary stage of collective action they are focused on (b). In part b, groups were asked to describe where their energies are currently focused as an organization: on their initial formation, on working to meet their primary objectives, on working to meet new or secondary objectives, or whether they are inactive

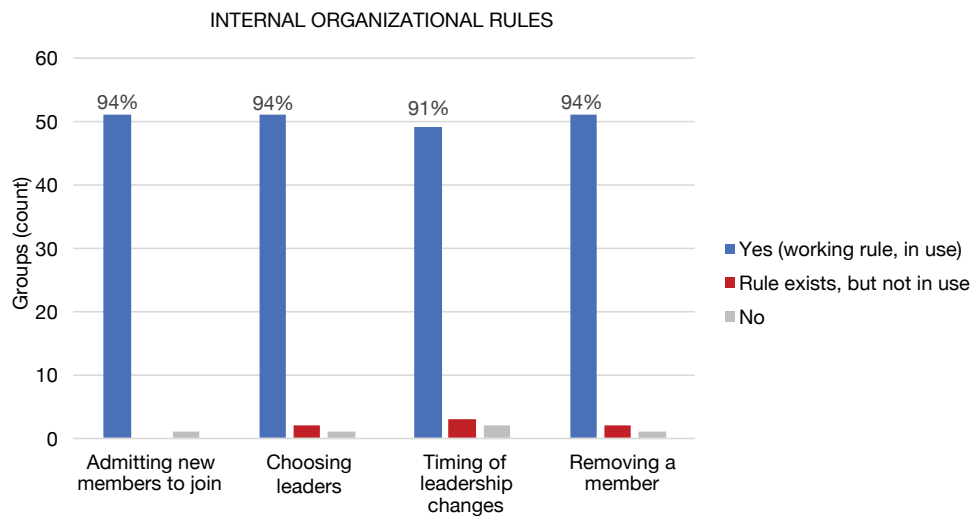


Rules

Internally, nearly all groups reported that they have functional rules governing their day-to-day operations, including admitting new members (94 percent), removing a member (94 percent), choosing leaders (94 percent), and the timing of leadership transitions (91 percent – Figure 4). Almost all groups reported that all members (executive and regular members) participate in rule creation. Group members typically pay their dues either always or most of the time (40 percent and 47 percent of groups, respectively), while a handful of groups (n = 7) do not require any membership

dues. Group leadership changes regularly, with changeover happening most commonly between every 6 months to 3 years. There appears to be democratic rule-making and regular leadership changeovers in women’s small-scale fisheries groups in Malawi, in addition to rules governing day-to-day operations and good compliance with rules governing ongoing financial contributions from members.

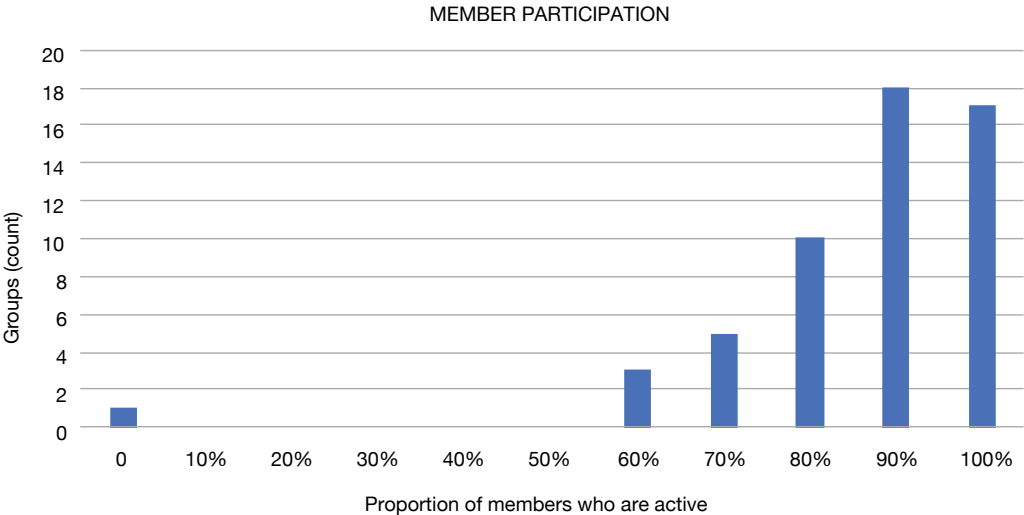
Figure 4. Presence of different types of internal rules and their functional status (in use, not in use, non-existent)



Group characteristics: size, gender and participation

Currently, average group size is 19 members. More than two-thirds of groups are mixed-gender groups (70 percent) and the average gender composition across all groups is 75 percent women. Most mixed-gender groups (80 percent) do not report an internal gendered division of labour (meaning men and women do the same tasks). About two-thirds of groups (69 percent) are interested in growing and adding new members, but only one-half of these groups report that they can find new members and are able to actively expand their membership. Those who do not wish to grow in size say they do not want to interfere with the current cohesive group dynamic, or that they are already at their desired group size. Looking at interest in growing by group type, associations, CBOs and cooperatives in particular are interested in growing, but are also having the greatest difficulty finding new members. Member participation is high on average (86 percent, with a median of 90 percent) across all groups (Figure 5). **Currently groups report strong member participation rates, and many groups are at their desired group size. Some groups (especially associations, cooperatives and CBOs) want to grow but are having trouble finding new members to join, and could use support expanding their membership.**

Figure 5. Member participation rates across groups



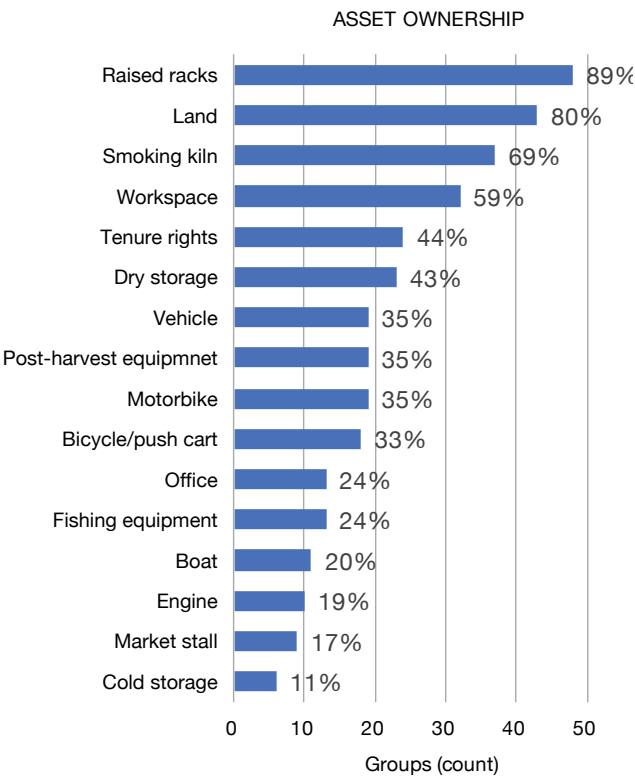
Internal communication and meetings

Strong internal communication and information sharing was reported among groups. Most groups reported that information is shared “always” (61 percent) or “most of the time” (28 percent) among their group members, and that this information is accessible to all members with few exceptions. However, 11 percent of groups experience issues with internal communication. Groups hold a variety of types of meetings and meet regularly. Most groups (78 percent) meet to work together (an average of 15 days a month) and to hold regularly planned meetings (an average of twice a month). Many groups also hold less frequent, more formal general assembly meetings an average of three times a year. **Information sharing and accessibility of information is strong at present. Groups meet regularly to work together and to discuss their business and their group operations and procedures. However, select groups are experiencing issues with communication and would benefit from training to strengthen their information-sharing practices.**

Assets

Most groups have access to raised drying racks (89 percent), land (80 percent), a smoking kiln (69 percent) and a secure workspace (59 percent – Figure 6). **Access to other assets such as office space, cold storage, dry storage, market stalls and other post-harvest processing equipment is low. This could be enhanced either through financial support (grants, loans, in-kind support) or communal spaces that allow groups to access these assets on a rotating or shared basis. Also, while access to drying racks is high, in many cases individual group members must negotiate access to these individually (i.e. they are not owned as a group), which could limit their availability to all members.**

Figure 6. Most common assets that groups have access to for their small-scale fisheries activities



Value chain activities

Nearly all groups work in post-harvest processing or trade of fish products, while a smaller number also work in pre-harvest activities or are directly engaged in harvesting (Figure 7). Small pelagics are the species type most groups work with (95 percent) and are the most important for group income, followed by medium or large pelagics (67 percent; this species was commonly listed as the second most important species type for group income) and demersal fish (65 percent – Figures 8a, 8b). Groups conduct their work along the value chain in a variety of ways, with about one-half (46 percent) conducting most of their fisheries-related work as individuals and slightly more than one-half working either collectively or both ways (i.e. individually and collectively). Groups typically access fish by buying directly from fishers, while some also harvest fish themselves or with a crew that they hire, or purchase fish from intermediaries (Figure 8c). Outlets for selling fish are dominated by local markets in the area, local markets that are far away (more than 2 hours travel), and medium or large national markets (Figure 8d). **Women's small-scale fisheries groups are not connected to a wide variety of market outlets for their fish products. Increased support to link these groups with more market opportunities (through information and training) would help strengthen them.**

Figure 7. Different stages of the small-scale fisheries value chain that groups are engaged in

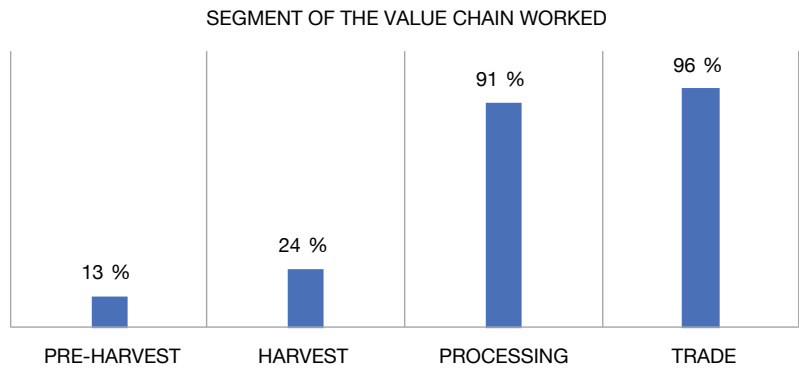
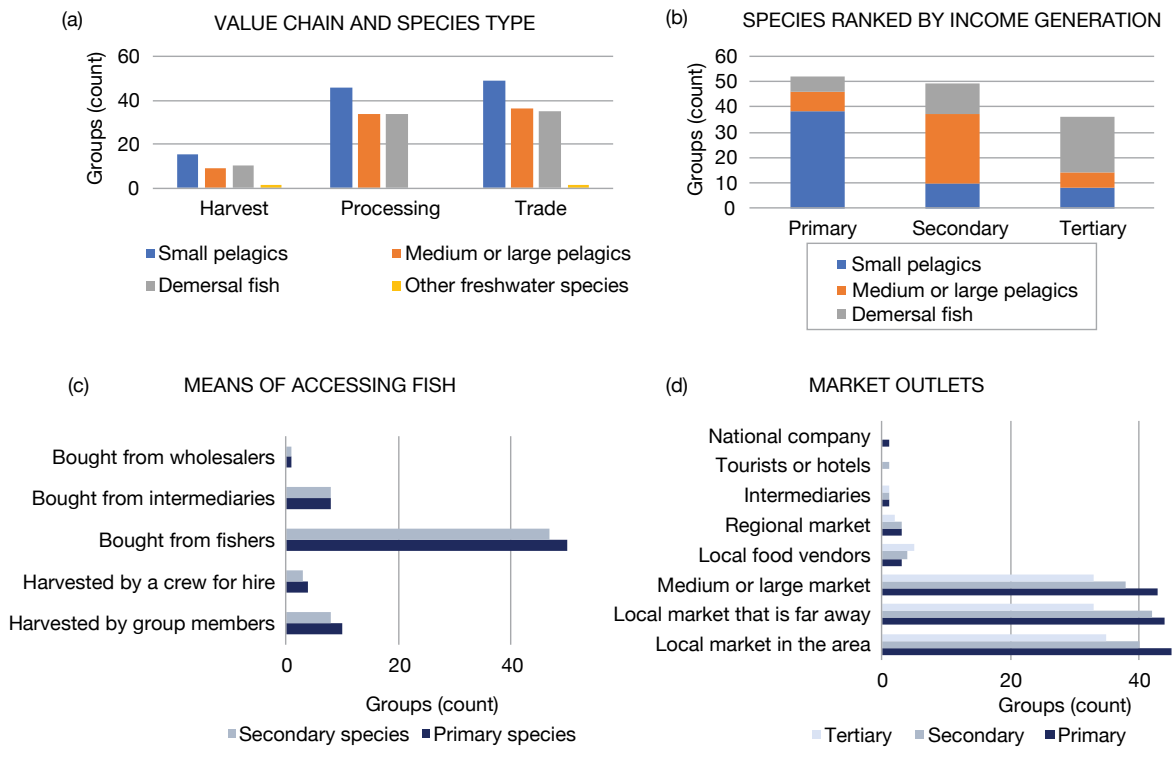


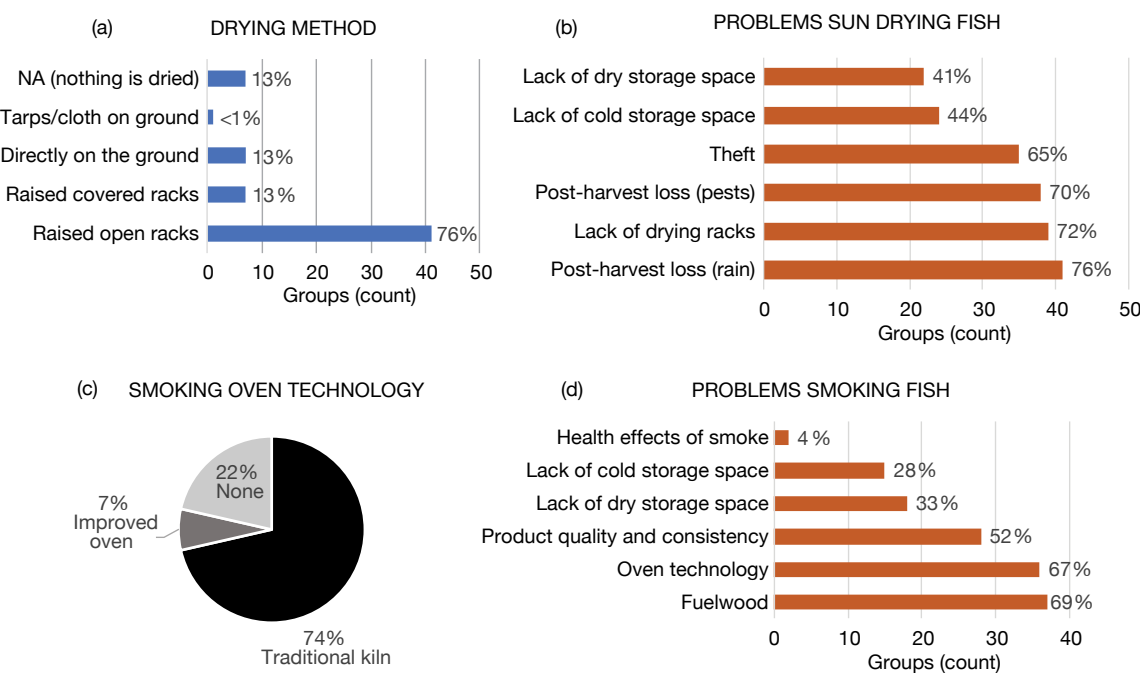
Figure 8. Different stages of the value chain groups are involved in and the main species they work with (a); the importance of each species to overall group income (b); how groups access fish (c); market outlets for selling fish (d). In charts b–d, “primary, secondary and tertiary” refer to rankings of species by importance to group income. Due to a technical survey error, in part c information on how tertiary species were accessed was not recorded



Post-harvest processing

In post-harvest processing, the most common method reported by groups was sun-drying fish on raised open racks (76 percent), followed by raised covered racks (13 percent) or directly on the ground (13 percent – Figure 9a). All groups reported problems related to sun-drying fish, with the most common being post-harvest loss due to rain (76 percent), access to or issues with drying racks (72 percent), post-harvest loss from pests (70 percent), and theft (65 percent), among others (Figure 9b). When smoking fish, most groups use a traditional kiln (74 percent); few have access to an improved oven (7 percent), and 22 percent do not have ovens or do not smoke fish (Figure 9c). All groups experience problems when smoking fish, the most common being access to fuelwood (69 percent), lack of access to improved ovens (67 percent) and product quality control or consistency (52 percent – Figure 9d). Access to technology would improve post-harvest processing, including improved ovens and drying racks (while most groups have access to raised racks, sufficient access to racks remains an issue) by helping address post-harvest losses, theft, and issues with access to fuelwood. Storage space for fresh fish and finished products is an issue that could be addressed through access to external financial support. Groups also need training to improve product quality and consistency when smoking fish and when using improved oven technologies.

Figure 9. Technologies used and problems experiences when sun-drying (a, b) and smoking fish (c, d).

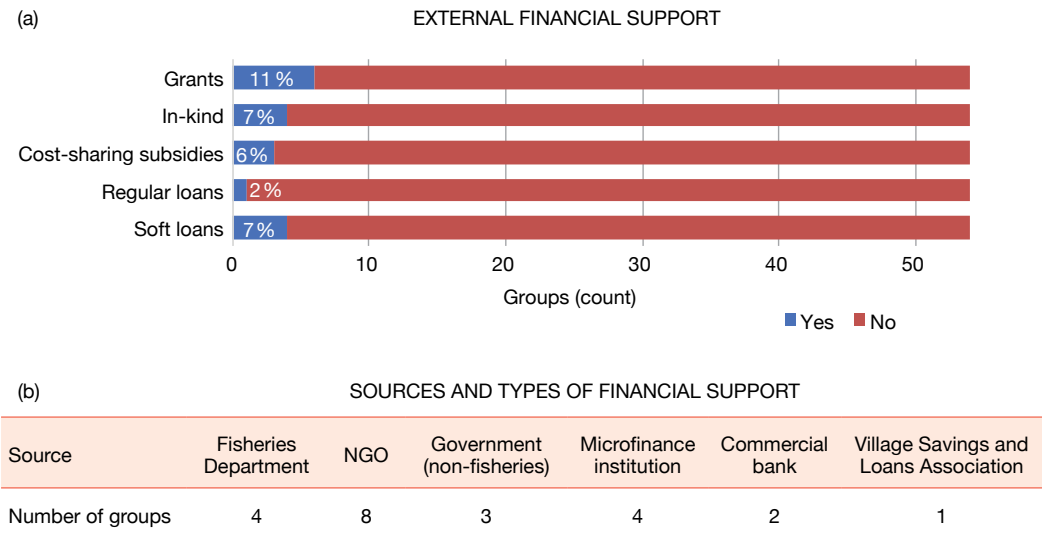


Finances

Groups vary in how they allocate profits from fishery activities, the most common method being that all profits go to the group account for collective expenses or redistribution to members through loans or dividends later (43 percent of groups). In other groups, members make regular contributions (e.g. dues, fees, or a percentage of sales) to the group account (31 percent), or keep their profits from the sale of fishery activities and only contribute to the group account as needed (26 percent). Total group income is generated from a variety of sources, the most common being

as-needed member contributions (61 percent of groups), regular member contributions (39 percent), collective sale of fishery products (22 percent), and other non-fishery related income-earning activities (22 percent). Some groups also reported that fines and fees for reporting illegal fishing gear are a source of income. External financial support was not a significant form of group income; only 2 percent of groups listed it as a source. Only 11 percent of groups reported that they have received any type of external financial support in the last five years (including through grants, loans, subsidies/cost-sharing, or in-kind support). The most common forms of external financial support received are grants and the most common sources of external financial support are NGOs, followed by the Fisheries Department and microfinance institutions (Figure 10a, 10b). When asked about their degree of financial dependence and sufficiency as a group, most (65 percent) groups said they are financially independent, while 20 percent said they are somewhat financially independent, and 11 percent said they are completely dependent on outside support. Nearly all groups (94 percent) reported that financial records are available to regular members to review. **Given the young age of groups and low propensity of outside financial support received to date, better access to different types of external financial support would help groups become more firmly established and help them accomplish their goals.**

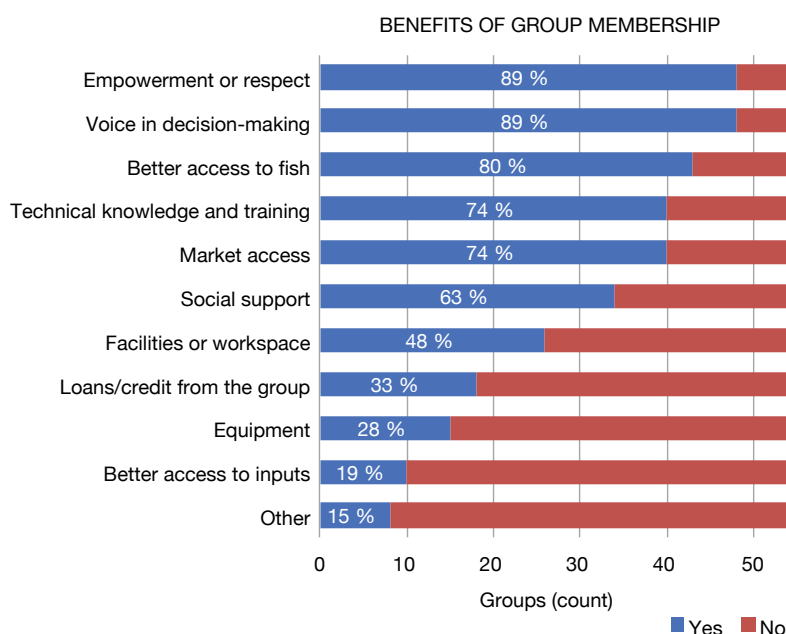
Figure 10. The types (a) and sources (b) of external financial support groups have received



Membership benefits, group strengths and barriers to success

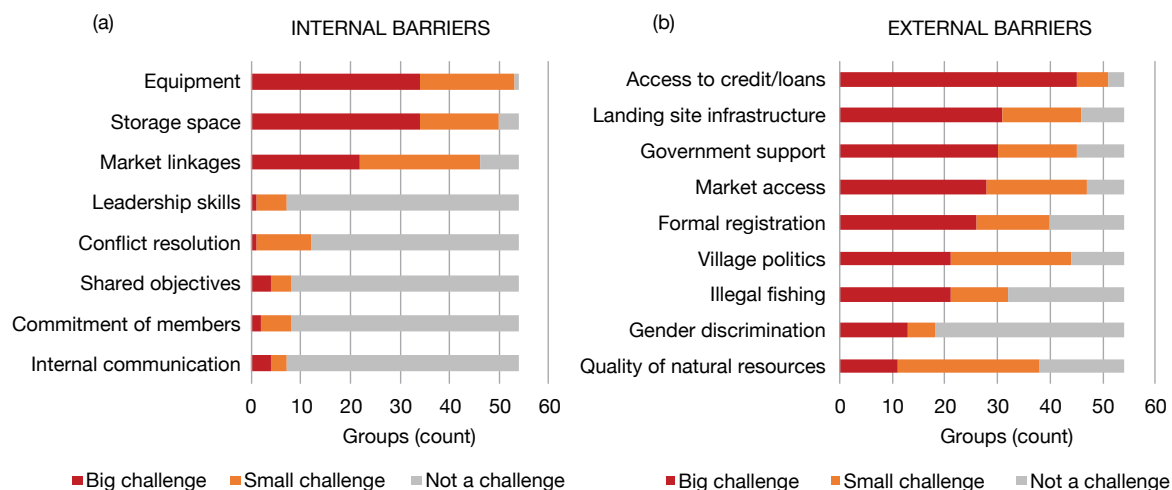
Groups indicated that members receive a variety of benefits through being part of their group. The most common benefits are empowerment and respect, a voice to engage in decision-making, better access to fish, advanced technical knowledge and training, better market access, and social support (Figure 11). Groups reported that their main strengths are good governance and regular meetings, unity and group cohesion, their ability to earn and save money, and the quality of their fish products. Groups’ main achievements include saving money to pay school fees or for the purchase of goods for their home, purchase of equipment (fishing nets, processing equipment) for their fishing business, and enforcement of better fishing regulations and sustainable practices (through patrolling for illegal fishing, establishment of fish sanctuaries, and removal of illegal gear types).

Figure 11. The different types of benefits individuals receive through membership in their group



Groups experience a variety of different types of external barriers that limit their group's ability to function and fulfil its goals, and to a lesser extent, they experience some internal barriers (meaning factors that they have control over). The most common significant (i.e. reported as a "big challenge") internal barriers are a lack of access to needed equipment, insufficient storage space, and market linkages (Figure 12a). Factors related to their internal group dynamics (leadership, communication, conflict resolution, etc.) were not rated as big challenges by most groups. Groups experienced a greater variety of significant external barriers, the most common being lack of access to external financial support (e.g. credit, loans), poor landing site infrastructure, inadequate government support, lack of access to formal market spaces, and formal registration (Figure 12b). Although less common, village politics, illegal fishing, gender discrimination and quality of natural resources were also characterized as external challenges by some groups. **Groups report having strong internal dynamics (e.g. leadership, member commitment).** The major internal barriers they experience are technical; this could be addressed through improved access to equipment (e.g. raised drying racks, improved ovens) and storage space, and through the creation of market linkages or better access to market information. Many of the external barriers experienced are larger, complex problems without a simple solution, but improved access to credit or loans, more consistent government support, and assistance with formal registration could still be improved through government outreach and partnerships with NGOs and other stakeholders.

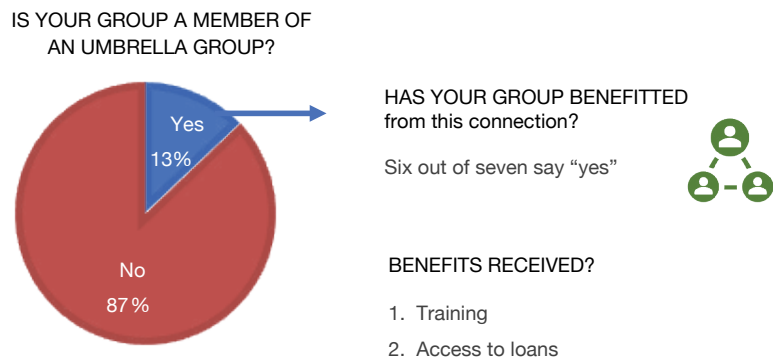
Figure 12. How groups rate different potential internal (a) and external barriers (b) that limit their capacity



External linkages

Most groups (87 percent) are not currently a member of a higher-level group (Figure 13). A handful of groups (13 percent) are, most of whom are members of a national organization and have benefitted from their membership in the higher-level group, with benefits including access to training (e.g. on environmental management) or access to soft loans to purchase equipment. Of the groups that are not already connected to a higher-level group, most (71 percent) said they would like to join a higher-level group and believed they would benefit from joining one. Connectivity among women's small-scale fisheries groups is low at present. Only a few groups (n = 10) have participated in a learning exchange with other groups, and less than one-third (27 percent) are in regular contact with other women's small-scale fisheries groups. There is an opportunity to strengthen linkages among women's small-scale fisheries groups through learning exchanges, enhancing connections and channels for communication among groups, and (for those who are interested) creating opportunities for organizations to join national or regional umbrella groups. Higher-level groups like a national umbrella group could help coordinate access to training, financial assistance, information sharing, and learning exchanges among existing women's small-scale fisheries groups.

Figure 13. Membership in higher-level umbrella groups and perceived benefits



Participation in fisheries governance and access to extension services

Only one-half of groups have participated in any formal fisheries governance activities (outside of their own group governance). The most common types of formal fisheries governance activities groups have engaged in include a formal fisheries governance consultation process (37 percent) and monitoring of fishing areas or regulations (26 percent – Figure 14). About 50 percent of groups reported receiving regular or less regular technical outreach support from the government through phone contact and field visits – slightly less common (45 percent) were regular invitations to government meetings or training events (Figure 15a). Groups want a variety of modes of outreach support from the government. Nearly all (98 percent) want field visits, followed by invitations to offices or meetings, and then phone contact (Figure 15b). Currently, about one-third of groups (28 percent) report that they regularly provide annual reports of their activities to the government. There is an opportunity to increase the frequency of technical outreach and extension services provided by the government to groups so that such contact occurs on a more regular basis (e.g. at least seasonally), particularly through invitations to meetings.

Figure 14. Rates of group participation in different types of formal fisheries governance activities. Groups could report participating in more than one type of activity, so percentages add up to more than 100%

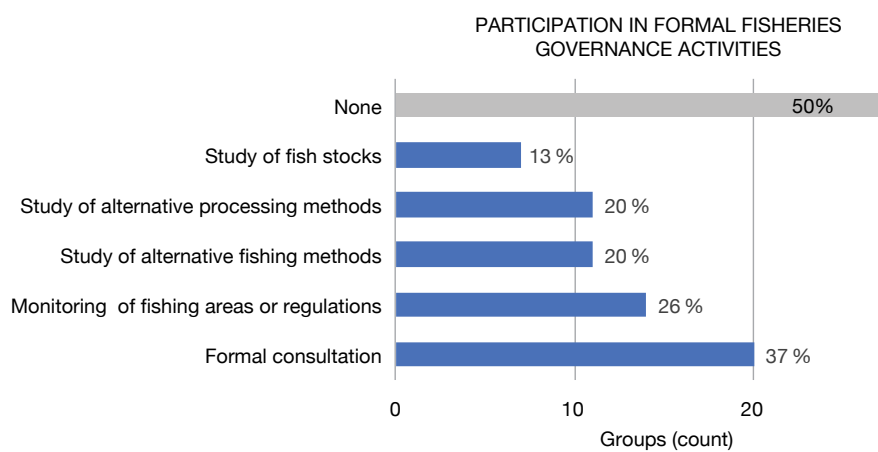
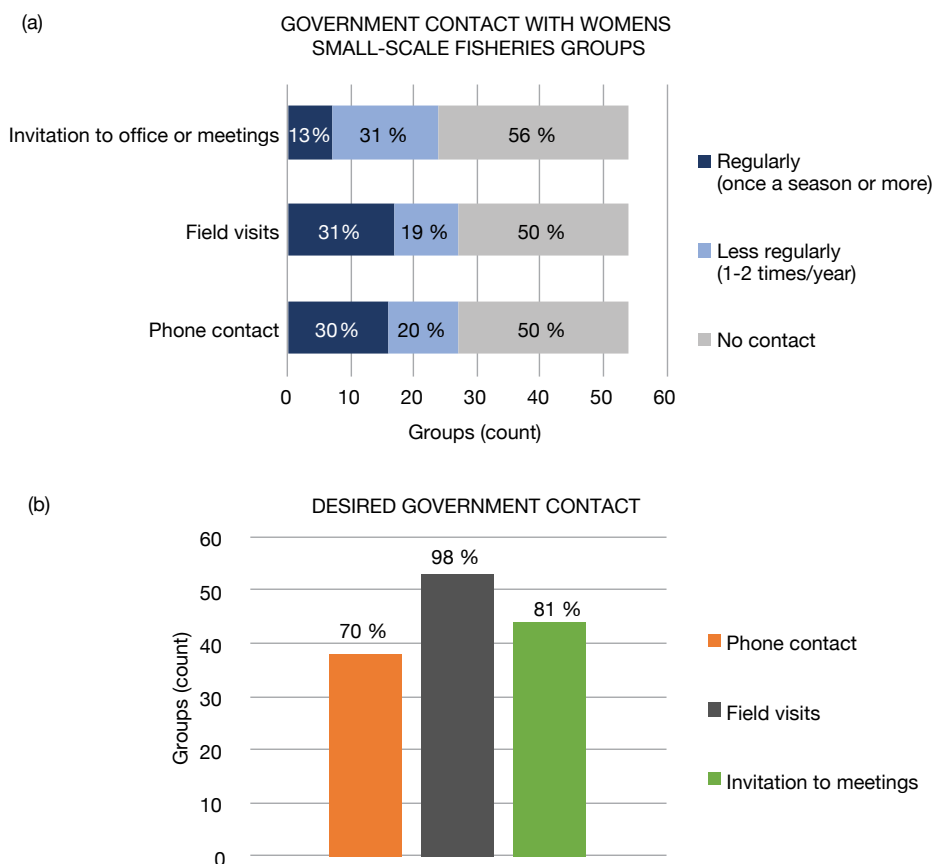


Figure 15. Current method and frequency of government outreach services (e.g. technical support and extension services) to groups (a) and desired mode of contact to receive government support in the future (b)



Training

Less than one-half of groups (43 percent) have received any type of technical training (Figure 16a). Of those that have, the most common types of training received are post-harvest processing, harvesting (e.g. sustainable techniques), environmental conservation and gender sensitivity (Figure 16b). The institutions providing technical training vary, but the most common overall are the Fisheries Department (70 percent of all training) followed by NGOs (15 percent). Groups reported having been successful at applying the knowledge they received through training, regardless of the type of training they received (Figure 17). There were only a few exceptions, where application was not successful or attempted because training was provided but not all members were trained, and thus were not able to apply it as a group. **Although groups that have received training have successfully applied the technical knowledge they have received so far, most groups have yet to receive any type of technical training to date.** Providing better access to technical training will help supply groups with new knowledge, advanced techniques, and strategies to enhance their capacities. Coordination (e.g. by the government or a national umbrella group) is needed to ensure that the most needed types of training are being provided (e.g. business management and financial skills) and are accessible to most groups (and to all or most members within a group). Also, some centralized coordination and communication among actors/institutions providing training would ensure efficient delivery of information without duplicating efforts.

Figure 16. Whether or not groups have received any technical training (a), and the different training types and main providers (e.g. institutions) (b)

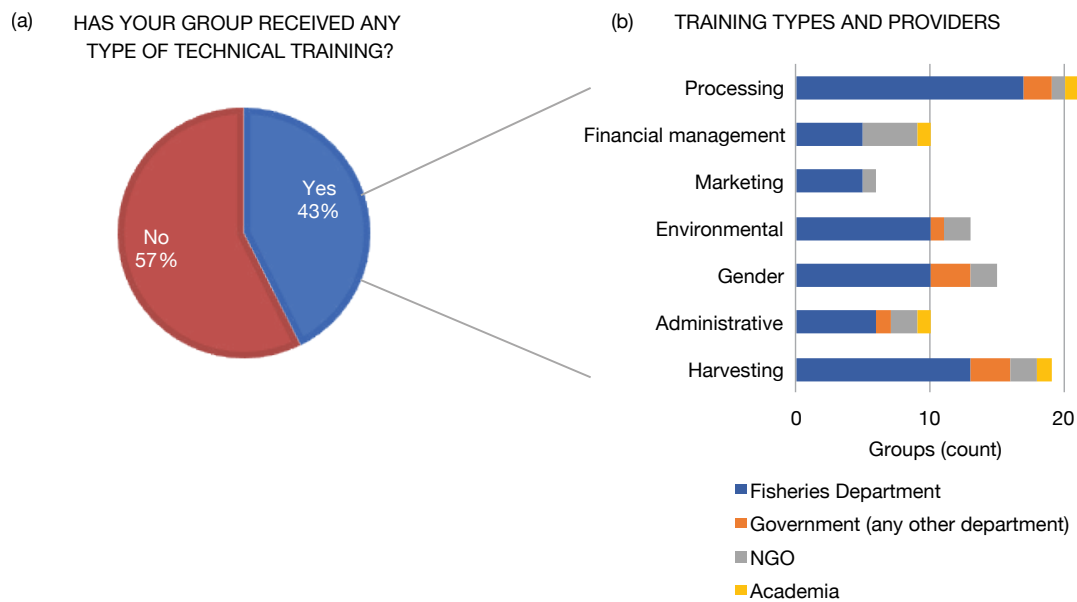
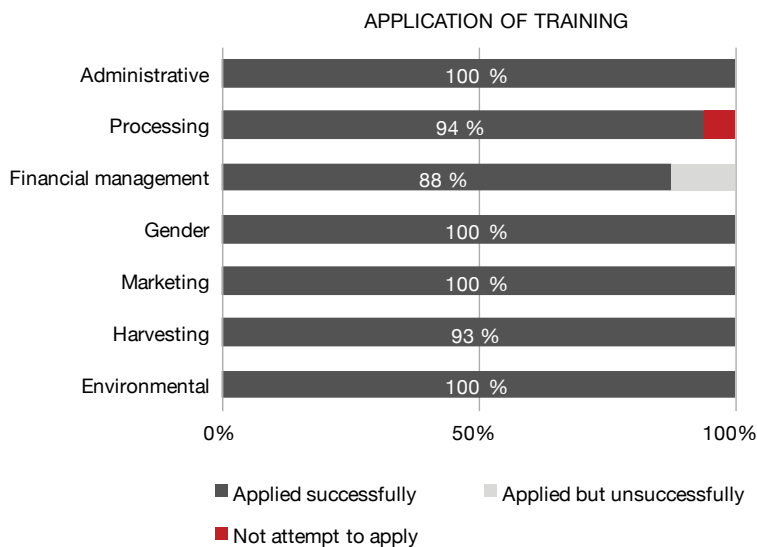



Figure 17. Groups' success in applying knowledge from the different types of training they have received (proportions)



Greatest needs

The greatest needs reported by groups in terms of strengthening the capacity to do their work were access to financial support (particularly soft loans), training on business management and financial skills, enhanced market linkages through training or government support, and better access to technologies (including boat engines, fishing gear and processing equipment). Others indicated that



a collective facility for conducting group processing activities was needed, such as a resource centre which could also be outfitted with a workspace and cold storage technologies, and that could host training events. Better access to soft loans and training on financial and business management are opportunities to strengthen groups' capacity. Better market access through training, government facilitation for groups to access markets, and information sharing would help groups create new market linkages. Further, many groups indicated they desired access to fishing gear and to engines in order to patrol fishing areas, which could help groups to participate in environmental monitoring and enforcement and to harvest their own fish. Access to subsidies, loans or grants to purchase these types of equipment would also help support already high-functioning groups.

Appendix 1. Methods

Background data collection

To estimate the number of women's small-scale fisheries groups in each district, first background data was collected with District Fisheries Officers (DFOs). Given resource limitations, it was not feasible to survey every landing site in every district of the country. Three districts were chosen for this study, including one from each region (Northern, Central and Southern) to ensure good geographic coverage. Within each district, two strata were chosen and four total landing sites. In each district, the DFO was asked to estimate the number and types of women's small-scale fisheries groups present in the selected landing sites (based on the inclusion criteria below). They collected this background data through a combination of landing site visits, expert knowledge and existing information. Based on these estimates of the total number of groups, a sampling protocol was applied to create the target sample size (see below for sampling protocol and Table 2).

Inclusion criteria. To be included in the survey, organizations had to meet the following criteria:

- a. The group identifies as an organization, either formally registered or informal.
- b. Membership is majority (more than 50 percent) women.
- c. Women are an active part of the organization's leadership.
- d. The majority of group members are engaged in capture fishing and related activities including pre-harvest, processing, and trade of fish or fish products.

Sampling protocol. The following sampling protocol was applied to the estimated number of women's small-scale fisheries groups (always rounding up to a whole number) in each landing site:

- Fewer than 7 organizations: do not sample (i.e. survey all groups);
- 8–10 organizations: sample 60 percent;
- 11–14 organizations: sample 50 percent;
- 15–20 organizations: sample 40 percent;
- More than 20 organizations: sample 30 percent where possible, 20 percent as needed.

Training

Training for data collection was led by the National Project Coordinator. Training covered the purpose and scope of the study, the survey questions, and how to arrange for and facilitate surveys. All enumerators were present for an in-person, one-day training event before collecting data.

Survey data collection

Surveys were administered with 2–3 members from a women's small-scale fisheries group present (including both executive committee members and regular members) and one member from the data collection team. Group members answered questions from the semi-structured questionnaire collectively, responding as to their group-level (i.e. not individual) characteristics only. Surveys took 1–2 hours to complete and were administered outdoors to allow for social distancing. Respondents were introduced to the purpose of the survey and asked their consent before proceeding; they were also informed of their right to skip any question or end the interview at any time. Data was collected digitally with a smartphone or tablet, using the free software KoboToolBox and the app KoboCollect to record responses.

Table 2. Results from background district-level questionnaire and sampling targets for each district

District	Region	Stratum to be sampled	Types of groups present	Total estimated number of groups present	Number of groups to be surveyed	Actual number of surveys collected
Karonga	Northern	Karonga Boma (7.6), Mllare (7.5), Kaporo (7.7), Kaporo	Beach Village Committees (BVCs), Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLs), informal associations	38	22	22
Salima	Central	4.1 South, Domira Bay (4.02), Senga Bay North (4.1)	BVCs, VSLs, informal associations, CBOs	7	7	9
Mangochi	Southern	Msaka, Madzedze, 3.1 South	BVCs, VSLs, cooperatives, CBOs	23	23	23

Survey instrument

The survey included informed consent language. After consent was granted, enumerators guided participants through questions about their group's history and formation, their objectives, their internal operations (e.g. rules, information sharing, meetings, participation rates, financial structure), external support received, external linkages, barriers, and their greatest needs. To review the survey's development and the survey instrument in full see the FAO report *A Methodological Guide for Mapping Women's Small-Scale Fishery Organizations to Assess their Capacities and Needs*.

Globally, women perform essential work throughout small-scale fisheries (SSF) food systems, yet much of this work is overlooked. Where women are not seen or acknowledged as important actors in fish value chains, they remain underrepresented in or excluded from formal governance processes and have limited say in decision-making. This lack of visibility hinders women's equal access to needed extension services and assets, such as credit and technology. Forming organizations (e.g., associations, cooperatives, savings, and credit groups) is one means of adapting to gender-specific challenges women face in the sector. Recent high-level commitments outline achieving women's full and effective participation in decision-making and leadership as global governance goals. For example, the dedicated chapter on gender in the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) encourages women's participation in fisheries organizations and their inclusion in monitoring and implementation. In addition, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on gender equality includes a target on ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life. But while enhanced access to organizations and decision-making spaces for women is critical for achieving global goals, current research on women's SSF organizations is lacking, leaving gaps in our understanding of existing barriers and opportunities to affect change.

The report provides a national overview of women's SSF organizations, defined as formal and informal organizations engaged in fisheries activities (including pre-harvest, harvest, or post-harvest processing and trade) whose leaders and members are majority women. The study of women's SSF organizations was part of a broader initiative, "Empowering women in SSF for sustainable food systems," through funding provided by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). To support sustainable food systems and nutrition in sub-Saharan Africa, NORAD provided funding for initial project activities in five countries – Ghana, Malawi, Sierra Leone, United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda. With a focus on strengthening women's roles in post-harvest processing and trade, the project aimed to help women both individually and as members of small businesses, professional organizations, and cooperatives to build and improve their skills and capacity to do their work. To attain these goals, an initial empirical assessment of the current landscape of organizations was undertaken as a first step. The report summarizes the results of the mapping assessment survey of women's SSF fisheries organizations carried out, and underscores the diversity of women's fisheries organizations and their present accomplishments and opportunities for governments, research institutions, non-governmental organizations, and private sector actors to support women's SSF organizations in line with the principles of the SSF Guidelines. For an overview of the methodology, see 'A methodological guide for mapping women's SSF organizations to assess their capacities and needs').

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