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The contribution of women in small-scale fisheries to healthy food systems and sustainable livelihoods in the United Republic of Tanzania

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Abbreviations and acronyms

BMU

Beach Management Unit

CEDAW

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

COWOFNET

Coastal Women Fishworkers' Network of Tanzania

FAO

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

MLF

Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries

SSF Guidelines

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

TAWFA

Tanzania Women Fishworkers Association

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1

Introduction

The small-scale fisheries sector has an essential role in transforming the food system of the United Republic of Tanzania. It contributes to ending poverty and hunger through healthy and sustainable diets and equitable livelihoods, and to leaving no one behind in the fight to end hunger and poverty.

Gender equality is a basic human right that is fundamental to achieving gender-equitable small-scale fisheries in the United Republic of Tanzania, as more than 220 000 women

are estimated to depend on the sector for their livelihoods (FAO, Duke University and WorldFish, 2023). Although women are less present in the harvesting phase of the value chain because of restrictive gender norms, they are largely engaged in post-harvest activities such as processing and trading.

At the household level, women play an essential role in food and nutrition security through their responsibilities in provision and preparation of food consumed in their home.

FIGURE 1
United Republic of Tanzania



OVER **190 000**
PEOPLE ARE EMPLOYED IN THE FISHERIES SECTOR

97% OF FISH PRODUCTION
ARE SOURCED FROM
SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES

CURRENT FISH PRODUCTION IS ESTIMATED TO BE

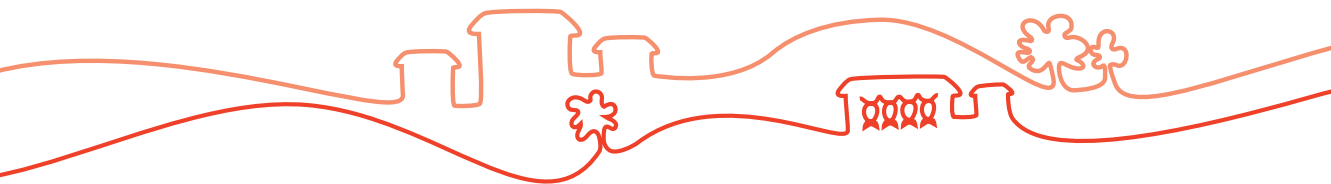
OVER **477 000**
TONNES PER YEAR

FISH MAKES UP **19.7%**
OF ANIMAL PROTEIN INTAKE AT COUNTRY LEVEL

However, research indicates that compared to men, they often bear a disproportionate work burden (Grassi, Landberg and Huyer, 2015). The responsibility of unpaid domestic and care work is usually assigned to women based on gendered social norms. Combined with work within the community, this results in a triple work burden for women, whose income levels, livelihoods and food security are therefore impacted. This also limits women's opportunities for formal, full-time paid employment, training and career advancement (UN Women, 2020).

The Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) set out guidelines for action and policy to secure sustainable small-scale fisheries. In particular, Chapter 8 of the SSF Guidelines highlights the crucial need to integrate gender mainstreaming into small-scale fisheries development strategies, as a way to challenge practices that are detrimental to women (FAO, 2015). Indeed, this brief targets social and cultural constraints as crucial aspects to be tackled in the Tanzanian context through tailored interventions at the national level, specifically in small-scale fisheries.

Furthermore, the SSF Guidelines call for compliance with international instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). This brief will further examine these instruments in connection with national policies aimed at realizing gender equality. Recognizing this call, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) elaborated and published an in-depth handbook, *Towards Gender-Equitable Small-Scale Fisheries – In support of the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication*. The handbook was developed to support gender-equitable small-scale fisheries by enhancing the understanding of their gender dimensions, with a focus on the specific role and conditions of women in the small-scale fisheries sector (Biswas, 2017). Strengthening commitment to and implementation of the SSF Guidelines, particularly in relation to addressing gender equality – but also food loss, and waste, and promoting equitable trade, governance, and utilization of fish – can help safeguard and enhance the benefits of small-scale fisheries for sustainable development in the United Republic of Tanzania.



2

National context

2.1 Legal framework, policies and regulations on gender equality and women's empowerment in the United Republic of Tanzania

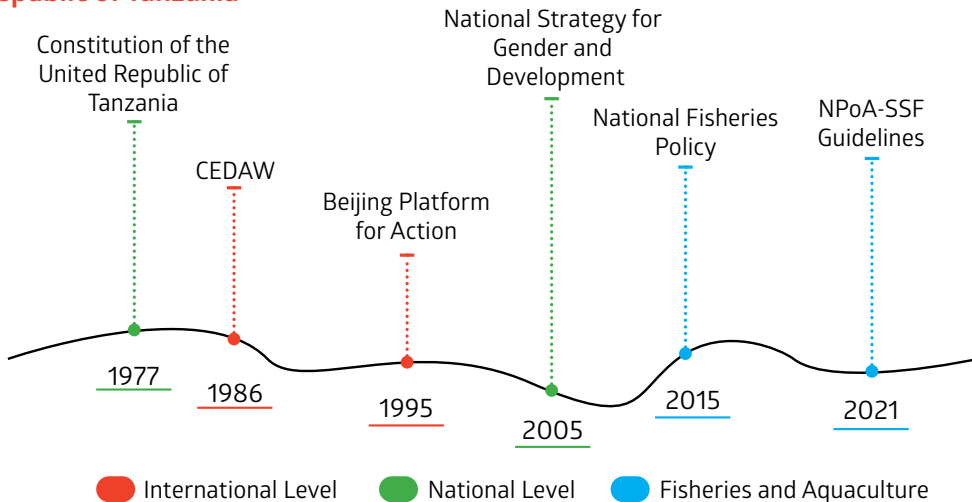
The Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania (1977) and subsequent amendments prohibit discrimination based on gender. The country is a signatory to the Sustainable Development Goals (2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development) and has ratified key international and regional human rights instruments, including CEDAW in 1986, the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995, the African

Union's Maputo Protocol on Women's Rights in Africa, the African Union's Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, and the Southern African Development Community's Protocol on Gender and Development. The Tanzanian government has identified four themes as country priorities: enhancement of women's legal capacity; economic empowerment of women and poverty eradication; women's political empowerment and decision making; and women's access to education and employment (World Bank, 2022).



FIGURE 2

A timeline for gender in the legal framework and policies of the United Republic of Tanzania



Source: FAO, n.d. FAOLEX database: legislative database of national laws and regulations on food, agriculture and renewable natural resources. Rome, FAO.

At the level of domestic policy, the country's Development Vision 2025 recognizes the importance of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The National Strategies for Growth and Reduction of Poverty 1 and 2 (MKUKUTA 1 and 2) emphasize gender mainstreaming and describe specific strategies for addressing gender-based violence. In contradiction to these commitments, the Tanzanian Constitution accepts customary law (see the Local Customary Law (Declaration) Order 1963) and religion-based laws that often suppress women's rights. Therefore, there are a number of discrepancies in the country's Constitution and laws pertaining to women's rights, which are further complicated by the practice of customary and religious laws (of Islamic and Hindu origin). Customary laws related to inheritance allow a daughter to inherit property if the family does not have a male heir; however, for wives who lost their male spouses, inheritance of property or other assets is rarely bestowed to women. Under Islamic law, daughters can only inherit half of what sons can inherit, and women can only inherit one-sixth of their husbands' property or assets (JICA, 2016).

Some of the main challenges for gender equality in the United Republic of Tanzania involve these legal discrepancies, which have contributed to women's inequitable access to and ownership of land and resources, their low participation at all levels of decision making, gender-based violence, and their exclusion from the economy. There have also been efforts to mainstream gender in legal frameworks targeting climate change and environment, which carry specific objectives to ensure that gender issues are mainstreamed in interventions, in order to attain gender equity and development in close connection with environmental sustainability. For example, the National Climate Change Response Strategy states among its goals the "mainstream[ing

of] gender and vulnerable groups' concerns, in addressing climate change adaptation and mitigation with the aim of enhancing equity on measures to address climate change" (Blue Action Fund, 2020).

The National Fisheries Sector Policy and Strategy Document (2015), amending the 1997 National Fisheries Sector Policy and Strategy Statement, explicitly includes and addresses gender, stating that "the Government shall promote gender mainstreaming and awareness in the fisheries and aquaculture interventions, and the Government shall promote equity in the access of fisheries production resources and benefits." This policy objective specifically focuses on: (1) integrating gender into planning and decision making; (2) promoting equal access to fisheries production resources and social services; and (3) ensuring capacity development as a key process to enhance gender equality (MLF, 2015). Neither the Fisheries Act (2003) nor the Fisheries Regulations (2009) make explicit mention of gender. However, the National BMU Guidelines developed within the context of fisheries regulations put forth procedures for mainstreaming gender in BMUs. For example, according to the BMU Guidelines, at least 30 percent of the members of each BMU executive committee must be women (Fisheries Regulations, 2009).

In March 2021, the United Republic of Tanzania launched its National Plan of Action for the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (NPoA-SSF). The NPoA-SSF aims to provide a framework that would enhance small-scale fisheries' contribution to food security and nutrition, including both men and women (MLF, 2021a). Acknowledging the gender-specific challenges for women in fisheries, the action plan includes output and

activities that specifically focus on supporting women (Sendall *et al.*, 2022).

The Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries (MLF), through the NPoA-SSF National Task Team, conducted a mapping study on women's and non-state actors' (NSA) organizations in the context of small-scale fisheries. The main goal was to identify women fishworkers and NSAs' organizations and their organization status, weaknesses, gaps, strength and needs, to inform intervention strategies. The study informed the formation of the Tanzania Women Fish Workers Association (TAWFA), which was launched in April 2019. The main goals of TAWFA are to improve women's income, working conditions, and status in decision-making processes, as well as to acknowledge and value the role that women play in ensuring food security and nutrition as well as reducing poverty in the fisheries sector. The MLF is working closely with partners to strengthen TAWFA through establishing specific waterbody-based TAWFA chapters. To date, three chapters have been launched: Lake Victoria in 2021, Coastal Women Fishworkers' Network of Tanzania (COWOFNET) in marine waters in 2022, and Lake Tanganyika in 2022.

Likewise, in 2021, the MLF established the Fisheries Gender Desk (FGD). The FGD's responsibilities include coordinating gender-related activities, serving as an institutional link between TAWFA and the government, and addressing constraints facing both men and women in the fisheries sector (Lau and Ruano-Chamorro, 2021).

Despite these efforts, there is still difficulty in implementing policies, given the lack of knowledge on gendered access to fishery resources, market information, and finance (Bradford and Katikiro, 2019). Another challenge is women's lack of critical consciousness around gender inequality and the potential for empowerment.

2.2 Sociocultural and economic context

The gendered characterization of Tanzanian society also extends to the fishery sector. Here, a gendered division of labour – with women holding mostly reproductive roles while men are responsible for production – has resulted in a socialized spatial division (de la Torre-Castro *et al.*, 2017) that constructs fisheries as a male space. Such spatial positionalities



Socioeconomic statistics

THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA ranked **146th** out of 170 countries on the **GENDER INEQUALITY INDEX** (UNDP, n.d.)

The ratio of **FEMALE-TO-MALE PARTICIPATION RATES** in wage and salaried work increased to **64 percent** in 2019 from **35 percent** in 2000 (World Bank, 2022)

40 percent of women aged 15-49 years reported that they have been subject to **PHYSICAL VIOLENCE**, while **17 percent** have experienced **SEXUAL VIOLENCE**. (World Bank, 2022)

Women in the United Republic of Tanzania spend **16.5 percent** of their time on **UNPAID DOMESTIC CHORES AND CARE WORK** (UN Women, n.d.)



BOX 1

Gender-based discrimination and violence against women

- In the **small-scale fisheries sector**, women face **gender-based discrimination** and **gender-based violence** within the fish value chain.
- “**Fish for sex**” or “**Sex for Fish**” and other power-laden discriminatory behaviours towards women are all common in the fisheries sector in the United Republic of Tanzania.
- Several forms of **emotional and psychological abuse** against women have also been observed in response to their engagement in the fishery business, and husbands still have control over women’s earnings.*
- Law enforcement (police) are at the forefront in **harassing women and demanding sex** in exchange for their services, as reported by Tanzanian women.**

Notes: *Bradford, K. & Katikiro, R. 2019. *Fighting the tides: A review of gender and fisheries in Tanzania*. *Fisheries Research*, 216: 79–88. [dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.fishres.2019.04.003](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fishres.2019.04.003); **FAO. 2023. *Empowering Women in Small-Scale Fisheries for Sustainable Food Systems - Consolidated Baseline Report: Ghana, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania*. Rome, FAO.

are linked to the duties and prevailing taboos (Fröcklin *et al.*, 2014; Bradford and Katikiro, 2019) and, more profoundly, to the identities of gendered individuals. Furthermore, the impact of discriminatory societal norms on each individual woman depends on the extent of overlapping minority identities and positions relative to wealth, disability, marital status, age, education, ethnicity and migration status (Lwenya *et al.*, 2010; Badstue *et al.*, 2021).

The sustained economic growth experienced by the United Republic of Tanzania in the past 20 years has led the country to transition from a low-income to a middle-income economy in 2020 (World Bank, 2022). Such an achievement is partially explained by the Government’s longstanding efforts to expand women’s economic opportunities and mainstream gender into the country’s developmental agenda. However, despite the strong advancements made by the country in the last two decades, profound discrepancies between men and women are still visible at the educational and employment level.

Women in Tanzanian small-scale fisheries are largely exposed to poverty (Odhon *et al.*, 2020), and the extent of their involvement in and benefits from the fishery value chain is especially influenced by sociocultural settings. Gender-based discrimination grounded in discriminatory beliefs and norms relegates women within the informal sector, thus inhibiting their full empowerment (WorldFish, 2010). Furthermore, conditions such as reduced mobility and lack of access to storage facilities are also detrimental to women’s access to markets (de la Torre-Castro *et al.*, 2017).

In Lake Victoria, women are said to rely more heavily on informal sources of credit like family members and moneylenders, given the inaccessibility of more formal credit types, which are usually linked to factors such as assets ownership (Medard *et al.*, 2002; Fröcklin *et al.*, 2014). The strong connection with informal sources of credit exposes women to increased vulnerability and dependency on moneylenders or family ties, thus excluding them from high-value markets (Fröcklin *et al.*, 2013). Women



processors active in the marine waters sector have formed informal groups, which are known locally as upatu (Swahili for “circle”) and kutunzana (“mutual help”, in Swahili), wherein each member makes a regular monthly savings contribution to a common pool of funds. The funds are accessed by individual members in a rotational arrangement or can be provided to members through short-term loans with a fixed interest rate. These groups are seen as a coping mechanism, both providing financial support to processors and enabling socializing with other group members (Ibengwe *et al.*, 2022).

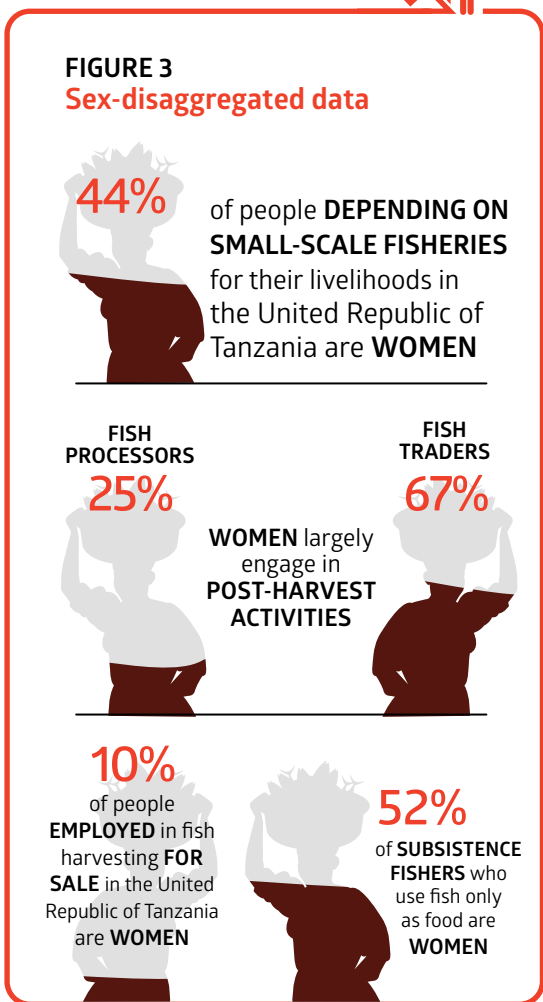
Within a larger programme, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in 2006 started a specific livelihood and enterprise development component targeting women in six districts among the coastal communities along the Indian Ocean. Through the establishment of community microfinance groups, the women undertook various enterprise activities and accumulated savings. This allowed them to acquire assets such as plots, cars, fishing and cargo boats, or to create new businesses such as mobile money transfers, shops and seaweed products. This initiative enabled women to raise their financial, economic and social power, as well as empowered them through access to leadership positions at the community level (Medard, 2022).

2.3 Sex-disaggregated data – Employment

According to the Women Count Data Hub (UN Women), the performance of the United Republic of Tanzania on gender data shows that 54.1 percent of data is missing, followed by 22.1 percent of data being “low-performance”, and the remaining 23.8 percent being “medium-” and “high-performance” data (13.1 percent and 10.7 percent, respectively).

A national assessment on gender statistics in the United Republic of Tanzania was conducted

in 2018, revealing three interrelated challenges. First, there is no explicit roadmap in the country’s development strategies or statistical plans to enhance the collection and use of gender data, including sex-disaggregated data (UN Women, 2022). Concurrently, despite the commitment of the national statistical system to produce and monitor gender data related to SDGs, less than 30 percent of the



Data estimates. Source: Adapted from FAO, Duke University & WorldFish. 2023 *Illuminating Hidden Harvests - The contributions of small-scale fisheries to sustainable development*. Rome, FAO.

related indicators are fully available and include disaggregation beyond sex. Finally, lack of reliable sources for gathering of both quantitative and qualitative data makes the organization and updating of forums on gender statistics hard to attain (UN Women, 2022).

A lack of budget for gender mainstreaming and the lack of gender-disaggregated data has prevented more holistic strategies to address inequitable gender relations and the division of labour (Badstue *et al.*, 2021).

UN Women has reported on the effort made by the United Republic of Tanzania to drive structural improvement in the national statistical system in order to prioritize the production of reliable gender statistics in national plans, laws and strategies. One example is the 2019 Statistics Act, which paved the way for the drafting of a Gender Statistics Strategy (UN Women, 2022). Furthermore,

the country has implemented coordination mechanisms to improve the availability and increased use of gender statistics. These actions encourage an increased commitment of financial resources for gender statistics, as well as for the implementation of capacity development in order to improve reporting on gender data (UN Women, 2022). However, there is no actual evidence of how these efforts are having a direct impact on gender statistics as related to the fisheries sector.

Indeed, the lack of disaggregated data by gender is a specific characteristic of the fishery sector, such that no official data have been reported or published on formal and informal employment, or on the economic benefits of women's work in small-scale fisheries (Bradford and Katikiro, 2019). This ultimately impedes recognizing women's hidden work as a vital contribution to the sector's sustainability (WorldFish, 2010).

3

Methodology

The information for this brief comes from a review of the available literature, as well as from primary data collected through gender-sensitive surveys conducted as part of a FAO small-scale fisheries project.¹ Primary data were collected in the United Republic of Tanzania between 9 December 2020 and 23 January 2021. The data collection methods included individual questionnaires (n=282), focus group discussions (n=13) and key informant interviews (n=18). Respondents to the individual questionnaires were composed of 274 women and 8 men. The study took place in six regions and six districts in the country Tanzania: Lindi (Kilwa District), Tanga (Pangani District),

Kilimanjaro (Mwanga District), Kigoma (Kigoma District), Kagera (Muleba District) and Mwanza (Illemela District), with a focus on eight selected landing sites.

The literature review involved using electronic databases to identify journal articles as well as grey literature, national and international statistics reports, and national and international policies and regulations. The literature review served to validate data from the small-scale fisheries surveys, as well as to provide additional context to clarify gender dynamics in Tanzanian fisheries.

¹ The data for this brief were collected as part of a FAO small-scale fisheries study conducted under the Empowering women in small-scale fisheries for sustainable food systems (FGCP/GLO/645/NOR) project funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, as well as through the continuation of this work under the project titled Implementing the Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines for gender-equitable and climate-resilient food systems and livelihoods (FMM/GLO/155/MUL), funded by the Flexible Multi-Partner Mechanism, now Flexible Volunteer Contributions (FVC) (FAO, 2023).



4

The gender in the small-scale fisheries value chains

4.1 Understanding gender and the role of women in small-scale fisheries in the United Republic of Tanzania

The cultural belief that views men as linked to the waterscape and women as mostly belonging to land contributes to the gendered division of roles seen in many fishery sectors worldwide, including in the United Republic of Tanzania (Alonso-Poblacion and Niehof, 2019; Bradford and Katikiro, 2019; de la Torre-Castro *et al.*, 2017). In the FAO small-scale fisheries study, most women reported being involved in fish marketing and processing, which meant that their engagement was mostly related to post-harvest activities. These were the main activities carried out by Tanzanian women, with fishing relegated to lower numbers: in fact, Tanzania showed relatively low percentages of household members involved in fishing, with a predominance of men engaged in this activity (FAO, 2023). These findings reflect those of other studies conducted in the United Republic of Tanzania, which have consistently found that women's role in fisheries is predominantly limited to processing and trading, with limited involvement in primary production (Medard, van Hijck and Hebinck, 2019; Fröcklin *et al.*, 2013).

In addition to their participation in the fisheries sector, women in the United Republic of

Tanzania are responsible for most household chores and care work (de la Torre-Castro *et al.*, 2017). This work occupies a substantial amount of women's time. In addition, it compels women to participate in income-generating activities that are conducive to their household responsibilities because they are close to home (de la Torre-Castro *et al.*, 2017; Fröcklin *et al.*, 2014). As such, women's engagement in fisheries is mediated by their restricted time and mobility, which may prevent women from accessing diverse markets and social networks (Bradford and Katikiro, 2019; de la Torre-Castro *et al.*, 2017; Fröcklin *et al.*, 2014).

Despite the long-lasting and consolidated gendered division of labour, gender roles and perceptions in the United Republic of Tanzania are constantly changing and renegotiated within households and communities. Women in the country are keenly aware of their exclusion from specific activities and the inequality deriving from it: many Tanzanian women in the FAO small-scale fisheries study clearly disagreed that fishing should be a man's responsibility and that women should not be allowed to participate. Similarly, most women in the same study disagreed that they should be the ones cleaning, processing and trading fish, and that they should be primarily responsible for preparing meals (FAO, 2023). In their research in rural areas of the United Republic of Tanzania, Badstue *et al.* (2021) found that most

women desired equitable decision-making in their households, although they were unable to exercise these demands because of fears of gender-based violence. Men in the study also claimed to support gender equality, although this was contingent on retaining final decision-making authority. These findings reflected an ongoing questioning of existing gender roles, while also suggesting that gender equality might be understood differently by men and women. This highlighted the importance of engaging men alongside women in gender transformative change.

4.2 (Equal) voice and decision-making power

When it comes to decision-making power in small-scale fisheries, it is essential to understand and assess the various degrees of empowerment women can benefit from to ensure their voices are heard.

In the United Republic of Tanzania, women have reported that their voices are often ignored on issues in the fisheries that are relevant to them (FAO, 2023). Studies in the country have found very low rates of women's participation in decision-making bodies and fisheries associations (Sendall *et al.*, 2022; Fröcklin *et al.*, 2013). Most Tanzanian women in the FAO small-scale fisheries study claimed that joining organized groups would help them raise their voices. However, low willingness to pay membership fees seems to be a major obstacle for accession to these organizations (FAO, 2023), as well as lack of time and support (Fröcklin *et al.*, 2013).

In terms of decision-making regarding activities in the value chain, women in the FAO small-scale fisheries study expressed that they had no input in decision-making regarding fishing, fish storage, fish transportation and other income-generating activities. On the

other hand, they seemed to have a moderate influence on decision-making regarding fish buying, fish processing and fish marketing (FAO, 2023). Near Lake Tanganyika, women similarly reported that their husbands made decisions unilaterally on household income (Sendall *et al.*, 2022), while in the United Republic of Tanzania, Zanzibar, men made most important household decisions (Fröcklin *et al.*, 2013). Given women's high levels of engagement in fish processing and marketing, their limited influence on decisions about these activities may restrict their ability to direct their own livelihoods.

Regarding individual and collective action, 32 percent of Tanzanian women surveyed as part of the FAO small-scale fisheries study claimed to be uncomfortable speaking out in public to decide on projects. However, 29 percent also reported feeling comfortable doing so. The same percentages apply to the share of women feeling comfortable speaking out and protesting about activities related to fisheries (FAO, 2023). Research in other natural resource sectors in the United Republic of Tanzania has similarly found that while women may attend governance meetings, they are not comfortable speaking up because of social norms and lack of confidence (Tough *et al.*, 2022; Killian and Hyle, 2020; Mushi, 2018). Women's participation in community decision-making and collective action is essential to challenging gender inequality, strengthening women's rights, and improving natural resource management and community development (Gopal *et al.*, 2020; FAO, 2013; Agrawal *et al.*, 2006). However, this can only be achieved if women and their allies have the skills, confidence and support to organize for change.

Given these findings, it is unsurprising that most women in the FAO small-scale fisheries study had not participated in any local government meetings (FAO, 2023). Similarly,

de la Torre-Castro *et al.* (2017) found that only one woman had participated in government meetings and workshops during the study period, compared to 11 men. Of the women in the FAO small-scale fisheries study who did participate in government meetings and engaged in fisheries structures, 40 percent of women felt not at all satisfied with their engagement with those meetings and structures, while 24 percent were very satisfied (FAO, 2023). Women's exclusion from these spaces may be reflected in fisheries resource management, which has been found to exclude women's activities and the types and ways in which they use natural resources (de la Torre-Castro *et al.*, 2017; Fröcklin *et al.*, 2014).

The United Republic of Tanzania is committed to putting into action the objectives of the SSF Guidelines. For instance, the formation of TAWFA was intended to create a national platform for women where their voices could be heard and information exchanged. Furthermore, as women in the sector are not a homogenous category of people, TAWFA chapters in specific waterbodies were established, to ensure participatory bottom-up processes through collective engagement and empowering more women to voice their input, interests, and priorities. Similarly, the Fisheries Gender Desk at the MLF is intended to ensure that women are participating in decision-making processes at different levels, including policy and management. The Desk also makes sure that gender components are regularly implemented across policies, laws and regulations with a specific focus on fisheries, including projects and programmes targeting the fisheries sector (FAO, 2022). The creation of these and other similar spaces is an exciting development. However, their impact on women's decision-making power is yet to be seen.

4.3 (Equal) rights, access and control over resources

The ability to access and own productive assets has a clear linkage with decision-making power within the household, that is, the responsibility for decisions about the acquisition, use and disposal of such assets. Ownership of assets and control over income and resources depends on gender inequalities perpetuated in the fisheries value chain, which affects both women and men.

It was found that women in the United Republic of Tanzania own fish processing equipment, fish storage equipment and means of communications, more than fishing assets. However, these percentages are low compared to those prevailing in other countries in sub-Saharan Africa where women have similar roles and perform the same activities in the value chain (FAO, 2023). Similarly, other research has found that most women processors lack access to improved processing technologies such as drying racks and energy efficient stoves, thus reducing their profits and increasing their labour burden (Sendall *et al.*, 2022). Compared to men, women have further been found to have less access to physical resources such as transportation and freezers, which decreases women's access to markets because of both mobility and food loss constraints (Fröcklin *et al.*, 2013).

Beyond physical resources, women also experience barriers in accessing income and financial capital. In their study about Lake Tanganyika fisheries, Sendall *et al.* (2022) found that women processors captured a disproportionately low share of the direct value created in the value chain, while women wage labourers received less than half of men workers' wages per day. Similarly, the research done by Fröcklin *et al.* (2014) showed that men in the invertebrate fishery in United Republic of



BOX 2

Gender food loss and waste methodology: reducing food loss and waste in small-scale fisheries value chains

Reducing food losses remains a “multidimensional and complex challenge”.* In fact, overlooking the “underlying socio-cultural, institutional and economic structures in which value chain actors operate” can be as relevant factors to be considered as inadequate equipment and lack of infrastructures. “**Losses constitute lost income to fishers, processors and traders but they also contribute to food insecurity** because a loss of any fish means **less fish available for the consumer**”.**

Eighty-eight percent of Tanzanian women have reported to have **sold fish at a lower price to avoid losses**.*** This kind of choices is driven by external factors hampering the quality of fish and favouring its deterioration, such as poor handling practices and increased microbial contamination. In this regard, improved management of fish processing and trading is crucial support women working in the post-harvest sector, by ensuring that poor handling practices and sustained rain events do not have a significant impact on their revenue.

Notes: *FAO. 2018. *Gender and food loss in sustainable food value chains – A guiding note*. Rome; **Randrianantoandro, A., Ward, A. & Safa Barraza, A. 2022. *Gender and food loss in sustainable fish value chains in Africa*. Sustainable Fish Value Chain Development Series No. 1. Rome, FAO; ***FAO. 2023. *Empowering Women in Small-Scale Fisheries for Sustainable Food Systems - Consolidated Baseline Report: Ghana, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania*. Rome, FAO.

Tanzania, Zanzibar earned five times more than women per day. Another study in the same area identified that women traders' daily profit was less than half that of men (Fröcklin *et al.*, 2013). In the latter study, Fröcklin *et al.* also found that men and women had different degrees of access to financial capital: while men were able to access private loans, women relied primarily on family and friends, or local microcredit schemes.

Despite these challenges, women are resisting this inequitable access to resources in both their beliefs and their practices. In the FAO small-scale fisheries study, women respondents disagreed that only men should own canoes, nets and other fishing assets, and that only men should be involved in fisheries associations (FAO, 2023). According to Medard (2022), some women have found solutions to their lack of access to capital by relying on village community banks, which have enabled them to employ men and gain greater power

in some Tanzanian fisheries. As previously discussed, these findings reiterate that gender is a negotiated practice and thus that gender relations are subject to change.

4.4 (Equal) rights and access to services, markets and decent work

Women's involvement in markets is crucial to ensure the social and economic sustainability of the small-scale fisheries sector. To ensure access to markets, the availability of fisheries extensions, trainings, transportation, facilities and social networks is especially necessary.

Most women in the FAO small-scale fisheries study reported that they sell fish primarily at community and retail markets, with limited sales on regional markets and in wholesale (FAO, 2023). These findings likely reflect women's dual responsibilities in both the productive and reproductive spheres, which constrain women's mobility and social



BOX 3

Gender transformative approaches: addressing the root causes of gender inequalities and discrimination

The influence of **patriarchal customs** on Tanzanian society weakens institutional capability to implement and enforce gender-responsive legislations, ultimately hindering the achievement of gender equality. To tackle the latter issue, **gender transformative approaches** can and should be adopted and implemented. Such approaches aim to address the **root causes of gender discrimination** with methodologies targeted at both household and community levels. Through the uprooting of longstanding societal gendered structures, gender transformative approaches deliver improved development outcomes, gains in the private sector, and improved project performance and sustainability. This is often possible given the propensity of such approaches to reach beyond the mere individual empowerment of women by **tackling systemic constraints to gender equality**, that is, by ensuring that every individual owns the instruments to become an active agent of change for the advancement of gender equality.

Source: FAO, IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development) & WFP (World Food Programme). 2020. *Gender transformative approaches for food security, improved nutrition and sustainable agriculture – A compendium of fifteen good practices*. Rome, FAO, IFAD & WFP.

networks. Again, several studies have found that women are less likely to participate in larger distant markets because their location is far from the women's homes; another reason is that they lack free time required to build the relevant contacts (Medard, 2019; Fröcklin *et al.*, 2014; Fröcklin *et al.*, 2013). These barriers may impact women's profitability as well as their resilience to shifts in market conditions, given that they have a limited customer base.

Gender-responsive services and facilities at or near markets and landing sites can help to reduce fish loss, promote better handling practices, and reduce women's unpaid care work. According to a recent study in Lake Tanganyika, women who sell at markets usually have access to cold rooms, electricity, bathrooms and water in terms of facilities available in selling locations. On the other hand, they lack access to childcare centres, lockers and dry rooms when working in these facilities (Sendall *et al.*, 2022). Many women in the

United Republic of Tanzania reported walking to markets, instead of using taxis or other means of transport (FAO, 2023).

Access to up-to-date technical and market information is vital to building resilient businesses for both men and women. Over 50 percent of women in the FAO small-scale fisheries study said that they met a fishery extension officer on a yearly basis, stressing that sufficient access to fisheries extension services could lead to an improvement in fishing methods, production efficiency and socioeconomic conditions (FAO, 2023). Given the lack of access to markets and the limited use of improved processing technologies, women would likely benefit greatly from capacity-developing support, such as training on processing and storage best practices or collective negotiating. However, these initiatives will be most effective if accompanied by additional support to address inequality in decision-making power, control

over resources, and the gendered division of labour.

4.5 Reduction of women's work burden and gender-based constraints

To reduce the disproportionately large work burden women bear, and to create opportunities that were formerly inaccessible to them, it is important that their access to technologies, improved practices, and infrastructure be enhanced.

In terms of access to technologies, women in the United Republic of Tanzania still lack access to formal credit and financial capital that would enable them to invest in improved technologies

such as drying racks, modern stoves, and freezers (Fröcklin *et al.*, 2013). Thus, they face constraints in their activities across the value chain that prevent them from reducing their work burden and making their work more efficient. An example of this would be the use of modern stoves to smoke fish. Such stoves would be less dependent on firewood, less time-consuming to use, and easier to maintain. The use of these stoves to improve processing practices could reduce local deforestation, decrease the risks to women's health posed by prolonged exposure to wood and charcoal smoke, and support women's economic benefits, thus recognizing women's contribution to the value chain (Sendall *et al.*, 2022; Weyant



BOX 4

Effects of climate change

In the United Republic of Tanzania, the most cited fish species by women surveyed in the SSF study was **dagaa** (silver cyprinid, *Rastrineobola argentea*), at 46 percent. Indeed, this species is the predominant species for the fisheries sector, especially in the context of Lake Tanganyika and Lake Victoria. Qualitative data confirmed that small-scale fisheries households prefer consuming small fish species to medium and large fish, which are usually reserved for sale.*

In the context of Lake Victoria, for example, **rainfall** and **wind** play a key role in nutrient loading and cycling in the lake: in fact, variations in the **amount of rain** are one of the factors impacting the **distribution and abundance of fish**.**

In addition to this, climate warming has been reported to be the major driver in the decline of the other major basin in the United Republic of Tanzania: Lake Tanganyika. The **rise of water temperatures** because of climate change in the next decades are likely to put pelagic life at risk, including dagaa.** This would mean exposing communities and vulnerable groups to an increased risk of food insecurity, including women relying on this species for their activities and revenues in the value chain.

Notes: *FAO. 2023. *Empowering Women in Small-Scale Fisheries for Sustainable Food Systems - Consolidated Baseline Report: Ghana, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania*. Rome, FAO; **Kashindye, B.B. 2016. *Assessment of Dagaa (Rastrineobola argentea) stocks and effects of environment in Lake Victoria, East Africa*. Hafnarfjörður, Iceland, United Nations University Fisheries Training Programme. Final project.

et al., 2022). In early 2022, a WWF project provided deep freezers to participants in village community banks: improved post-harvest losses, increased price negotiation power and penetration to distant fish markets were among the benefits accrued by the beneficiaries of this initiative (Medard, 2022).

Enhancing infrastructure, such as means of transportation for women, is crucial to improve their mobility and consequently their wider access to markets and income opportunities. Currently, women's limited mobility forces them to borrow money, buy less fish, or engage in other income-generating activities to increase their income (Fröcklin *et al.*, 2013). Having easier access to landing sites and reducing the amount of time spent travelling would be key to make value chain activities compatible with women's scarcity of time and allow them to allocate more time to fishing-related activities.

New ideas to address these constraints can spark from the exchange of knowledge and specific trainings that can help women address challenges along the value chain. As reported by the women in the FAO small-scale fisheries study, the new ideas learned from project trainings were mainly related to fish processing, handling and selling, as a result of the exchange of ideas with women from other areas and regions (FAO, 2023). Through this knowledge exchange, women can achieve more efficient ways of participating in the value chain, reducing the time burden and fish loss. The use of new technologies should be included in future trainings, to ensure that new tools and practices do not exacerbate gender-based constraints and are instead used to tackle the root causes of gender inequality in a gender transformative way.

4.6 Gendered effects of climate change and other shocks and disasters in small-scale fisheries

The environment is changing and keeps posing new challenges to communities depending on small-scale fisheries for survival. Both self-employed women and women in waged work face low incomes due to participation in low-profit activities within the value chain, as well as time constraints deriving from unpaid care work. These factors may have a central role in women's inability to save money (Bradford and Katikiro, 2019). As women are already in a disadvantaged position, they are more likely to suffer from production decreases, natural resources degradation, and ecosystem damage that are linked to climate change (de la Torre-Castro *et al.*, 2022).

More specifically, climate change can affect the country's rich marine and inland fisheries resources in different ways, such as coral reef bleaching, changes in water temperature, wind velocity, sea-level increase and wave action, which can bring significant ecological and biological change to both freshwater and marine ecosystems (Hanifa *et al.*, 2015). Fish catch potential within the tropics has been calculated to drop by 40 percent, with increasing temperature playing a key role (de la Torre-Castro *et al.*, 2022). In the United Republic of Tanzania, women have showed limited knowledge about broader climate aspects. Coupled with scarce institutional and economic support, it is thus difficult for women to show a strong adaptive capacity to climate change (de la Torre-Castro *et al.*, 2022).

However, the biased perceptions shaping the gendered division of labour in the small-scale fisheries sector are also reflected in climate change adaptation plans. When women's roles and contributions are not taken into account in these plans, they expose different

actors (including women and other vulnerable groups) to significant amounts of risk, because of non-homogeneous adaptive capacity. The result has a negative impact on coastal communities, and especially on women, as they lack access to the resources they need to cope with shocks and adapt to changes (Hanifa *et al.*, 2015). The development process of climate

change adaptation plans would benefit from women's active participation, both because of their specific vulnerabilities as well as their specific understandings of the environment and gendered knowledge, fostered by the existing gendered division of labour.



5

Gender and small-scale fisheries stakeholders

5.1 Women in small-scale fisheries organizations

Understanding how women are organized is critical to designing effective interventions to strengthen their capacities for collective action, to function effectively as groups, and to gain recognition and access to participation in fisheries governance processes (FAO, 2022).

Even though Tanzanian women seem to be aware of their right to belong to fisheries organizations, such participation is very low (27 percent). Examining the trends from the past decade, this figure appears to be increasing, although it remains insufficient. The major benefits of participation in fisheries organizations as reported by women are social and economic. To a lesser extent, there are also representation advantages, as women benefit from stronger support mechanisms when they are part of an organization (FAO, 2023).

Women's social capital can be investigated by considering the type of organizations available to them and their avenues for involvement and participation. In a study conducted in the

United Republic of Tanzania, Zanzibar, women reported that a wide variety of organizations were open to them. The organizations' focus ranged from livelihood-related topics, to general aspects concerning village life, but also economic issues mainly related to microcredit (de la Torre-Castro *et al.*, 2022). However, while women were involved in several organizations, knowledge of the organizations beyond the local community level was limited. This may restrict women's access to wider social networks, information and resources (de la Torre-Castro *et al.*, 2022).

The creation of TAWFA has already been highlighted, as a relevant national platform for fostering key participatory approaches to raise women's voice and share their perspectives about value chain dynamics. However, participation in fisheries organizations that are not directly linked to women's organizations remains an issue that needs to be addressed, in order to shape a more gender-equitable environment where women can gain an equal voice and be more involved in decision making.

6

Conclusions and recommendations: gender needs and priorities

To achieve gender equality, ensure that women are able to fully participate in and benefit from the Tanzanian fishery sector, and in order to create an enabling environment for women at local and national levels, targeted actions should be enforced.

Policy and legal frameworks

- Draft **new legislation** that targets women's economic empowerment and boosts the set-up of national plans aiming at **eradicating poverty**, especially in the small-scale fisheries sector, by **supporting informal sources of credit already in place** and **developing parallel formal credit sources** that can create a more accessible, enhanced and stable system of economic support for women.
- Integrate a **gender perspective in policy frameworks** in order to tackle issues such as **vulnerability to climate change** or **gender-based violence** in the small-scale fisheries sector.

Knowledge generation and data collection systems

- Enhance **national data collection systems** and allocate adequate funding to ensure that sex-disaggregated data are consistently collected throughout the country, especially in the fisheries sector, but also to **ensure that currently available data are promptly**

organized and systematically available to inform research and decision making. Increasing the availability of gender data and **improving the quality of the related indicators** should be a priority in national plans of action, specifically targeting fisheries data to shed light on women's contributions in the sector.

Behavioural change and gender transformative approaches

- Engage with women, men and youth within communities through **awareness raising campaigns**, to **deconstruct predefined gender roles** and address the gendered division of labour in small-scale fisheries in the United Republic of Tanzania, and to redress gender discrimination in the various nodes of the value chains. In this regard, implementing and funding **gender transformative approaches** is key to achieve equality in the long term, as well as to disrupt gender-based constraints.

Targeted interventions for women's empowerment

- Encourage the **equal participation of women in fishery organizations** by supporting bottom-up approaches that empower women to raise their voices, inputs, interests and priorities - drawing on the experience of TAWFA, providing continuous funding and efforts for the development

of national platforms for women and to stimulate the growth of similar bodies in the sector.

- **Develop tailored information access programmes** and extension services for women in fisheries communities. These programmes could enhance their knowledge and skills relating to fish value chain activities, while also building awareness of mechanisms to protect their legal rights and support their access to existing social protection schemes and formal credit.
- **Reduce women's work burden** by integrating **accessible gender transformative technologies** into the value chain and fostering freedom of movement for women to enable their **wider participation in markets**. Women's access to land, markets and facilities should be supported through **direct investments to build processing and market spaces and infrastructure that are more efficient, less time-consuming, and free from sexual violence, harassment, and discrimination**. Specific services such as public transports and sanitary facilities should be provided for women to perform post-harvest activities independently and safely. Modern assets should also be made available, especially in the processing node of the value chain. This would make their work more profitable and less dependent on external factors.
- Train fishery extension officers, law enforcement, and government officials in the fisheries sector on **gender-related concepts and approaches**, to ensure interventions are tailored to the needs of women and men in a specific context, but also that women can participate in the value chain with a reduced risk of incurring violence and exploitation.
- Support **women's participation in fisheries associations** and other decision-making spaces by **reducing barriers related to women's roles and social norms**. This could include providing childcare and organizing meetings at appropriate times, facilitating meetings in a manner that allows less forceful voices to be heard, and setting quotas for women's representation in leadership positions. Training could also be provided to strengthen women's public-speaking and leadership skills, and to break down stereotypes about leadership and gender roles. Similarly, **direct support could be provided to women-led organizations** and advocacy groups to increase their recognition in governance processes.

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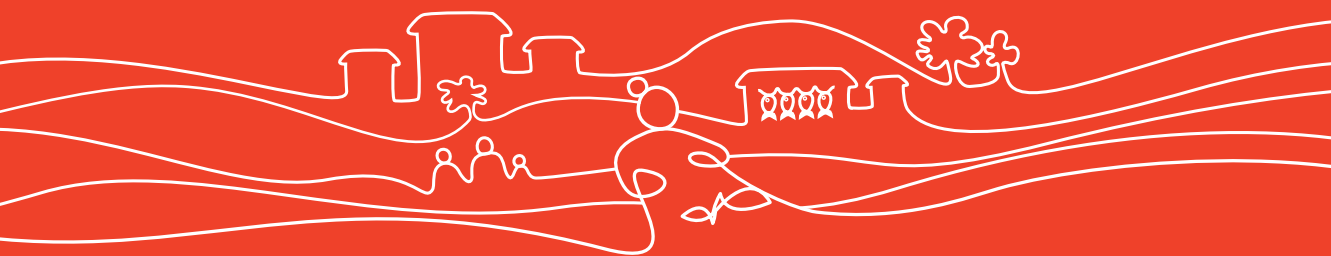
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The Gender Brief is tailored to provide insight into the contributions of women in small-scale fisheries to healthy food systems and sustainable livelihoods in the United Republic of Tanzania.

Approximately 220 000 women in the United Republic of Tanzania depend on small-scale fisheries for their livelihoods, mostly in the post-harvest sector. Pervasive gender norms limit women's opportunities and decision-making power at household and community levels, as they face many gender-based constraints in fisheries value chains and they are more vulnerable to intersecting factors such as poverty and gender-based violence.

Targeted actions should be undertaken to address gender inequalities and support women's empowerment in the Tanzanian fisheries sector, including developing gender-responsive policies to address climate change and gender-based violence, collecting and sharing standardized gender data, and supporting women's participation in fisheries associations and governance processes by reducing barriers related to gender norms.



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