



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



## The contribution of women in small-scale fisheries to healthy food systems and sustainable livelihoods in the Philippines



# The contribution of women in small-scale fisheries to healthy food systems and sustainable livelihoods in the Philippines



Required citation: FAO. 2023. *The contribution of women in small-scale fisheries to healthy food systems and sustainable livelihoods in the Philippines*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc7603en>

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this information product do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) concerning the legal or development status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The mention of specific companies or products of manufacturers, whether or not these have been patented, does not imply that these have been endorsed or recommended by FAO in preference to others of a similar nature that are not mentioned.

© FAO, 2023



Some rights reserved. This work is made available under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 IGO licence (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO; <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/igo/legalcode>).

Under the terms of this licence, this work may be copied, redistributed and adapted for non-commercial purposes, provided that the work is appropriately cited. In any use of this work, there should be no suggestion that FAO endorses any specific organization, products or services. The use of the FAO logo is not permitted. If the work is adapted, then it must be licensed under the same or equivalent Creative Commons licence. If a translation of this work is created, it must include the following disclaimer along with the required citation: "This translation was not created by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). FAO is not responsible for the content or accuracy of this translation. The original [Language] edition shall be the authoritative edition."

Disputes arising under the licence that cannot be settled amicably will be resolved by mediation and arbitration as described in Article 8 of the licence except as otherwise provided herein. The applicable mediation rules will be the mediation rules of the World Intellectual Property Organization <http://www.wipo.int/amc/en/mediation/rules> and any arbitration will be conducted in accordance with the Arbitration Rules of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL).

**Third-party materials.** Users wishing to reuse material from this work that is attributed to a third party, such as tables, figures or images, are responsible for determining whether permission is needed for that reuse and for obtaining permission from the copyright holder. The risk of claims resulting from infringement of any third-party-owned component in the work rests solely with the user.

**Sales, rights and licensing.** FAO information products are available on the FAO website ([www.fao.org/publications](http://www.fao.org/publications)) and can be purchased through [publications-sales@fao.org](mailto:publications-sales@fao.org). Requests for commercial use should be submitted via: [www.fao.org/contact-us/licence-request](http://www.fao.org/contact-us/licence-request). Queries regarding rights and licensing should be submitted to: [copyright@fao.org](mailto:copyright@fao.org).

# Contents

Abbreviations and acronyms	iv
Acknowledgements	v
1 Introduction	1
2 National context	3
3 Methodology	10
4 Gender in the small-scale fisheries value chains	12
5 Gender and small-scale fisheries stakeholders	23
6 Conclusions and recommendations – Gender needs and priorities	25
References	28

# Abbreviations and acronyms

## ASEAN

Association of Southeast Asian Nations

## BFAR

Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources

## CEDAW

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

## FAO

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

## GAD

gender and development

## HACCP

Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point

## LGU

Local Government Unit

## MPA

marine protected area

## SSF GUIDELINES

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

## WINFISH

National Network on Women in Fisheries in the Philippines, Inc.

# Acknowledgements

This work was undertaken as part of the FAO sub-programme titled “Implementing the Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines for gender equitable and climate resilient food systems and livelihoods”, financed under the Flexible Voluntary Contributions Mechanism, and utilizes results from the Illuminating Hidden Harvests initiative. This brief is part of a series of Small-Scale Fisheries and Gender Briefs that has been developed to shed light on the contribution of small-scale fisheries, and particularly the women working in them, to healthy food systems and sustainable livelihoods. This brief was developed by FAO NFI colleagues Jennifer Gee, Rachel Matheson, Matteo Luzzi, Roxane Misk, Molly Ahern, Lena Westlund and Nicole Franz, as well as by Lourdes Marina Espenido (FAO Philippines). The brief benefitted from contributions and validation from technical experts at the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) of the Republic of the Philippines and from Local Government Units. The authors would also like to thank FAO NFI colleague Manoela Militão de Siqueira for her editing support, as well as Maria Giannini for proofreading and Joanne Morgante for design and layout





# 1

## Introduction

The small-scale fisheries sector plays an essential role in transforming the Philippines food system. It contributes to ending poverty and hunger by providing healthy and sustainable diets and equitable livelihoods, and by leaving no one behind in the fight against hunger and poverty.

Gender equality is key in the context of the Philippines, as over 1.5 million women in

the country are estimated to depend on small-scale fisheries for their livelihoods (FAO, Duke University and WorldFish, 2023). Although women are not the main actors in the harvesting phase of the value chain, they have a crucial role within their households in the small-scale fisheries sector, where they largely engage in post-harvest activities such as processing and trading as well as subsistence fishing.

**FIGURE 1**  
**Philippines**



OVER **2 MILLION**  
PEOPLE ARE REGISTERED AS FISHERFOLK

OVER **50%** OF CAPTURE FISHERY  
PRODUCTION COMES FROM  
MUNICIPAL FISHERIES

TOTAL CURRENT FISH PRODUCTION  
IS ESTIMATED TO BE OVER  
**4 MILLION** METRIC TONNES

FISH MAKES UP  
**19.7%** OF PROTEIN  
CONSUMPTION IN  
THE COUNTRY

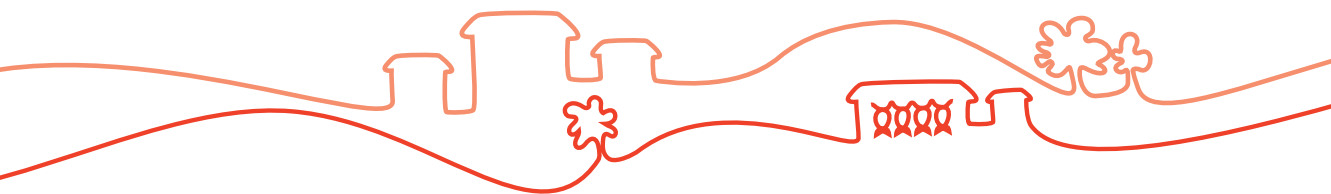
Sources: BFAR. 2021. *Philippines Fisheries Profile 2020*. Quezon City, Philippines; PSA. 2021. Food balance sheets (FBS) of the Philippines. Quezon City, Philippines.

Women play an essential role in food and nutrition security through their responsibilities in provision and preparation of food consumed at home. 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 because of gendered social norms. Combined with work within the community, this results in a triple work burden for women, whose levels of income, 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 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 Philippines context through

tailored interventions at the national level, specifically in smallscale 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. Based on the SSF Guidelines, in 2017, FAO elaborated and published an in-depth handbook, *Towards Gender-Equitable Small-Scale Fisheries – A 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*. The handbook was developed to support gender-equitable small-scale fisheries by enhancing 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 and implementation of the SSF Guidelines, particularly in relation to addressing gender equality – but also reducing 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 Philippines.



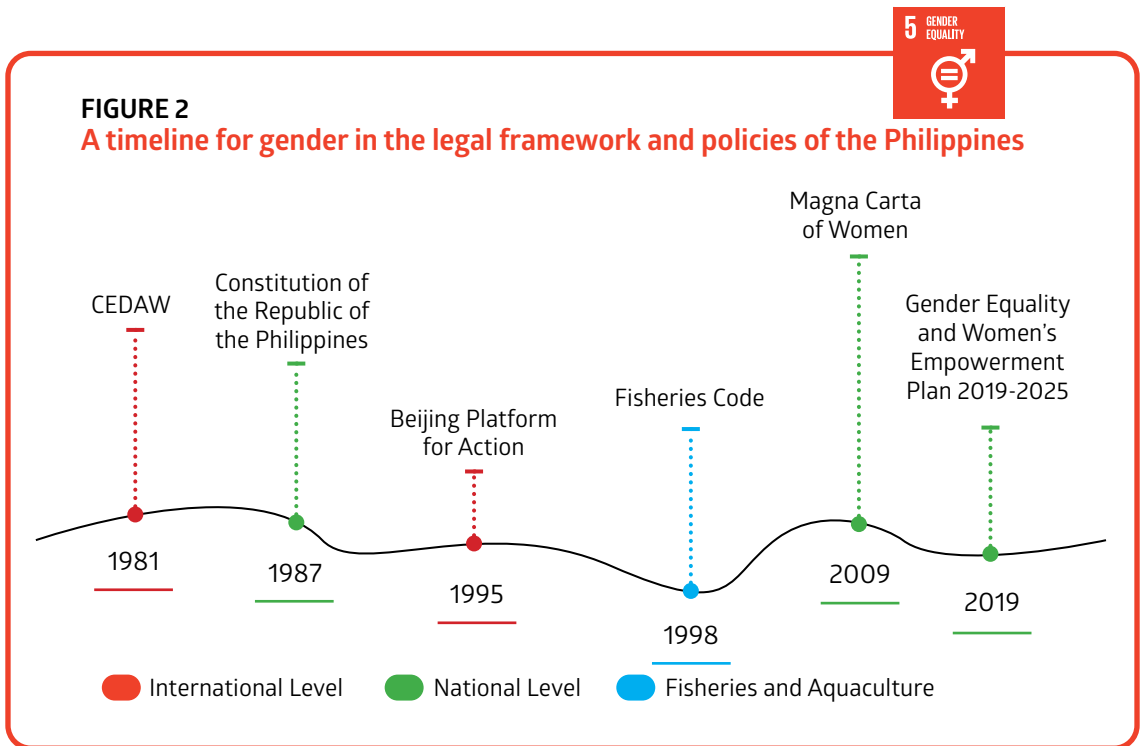
# 2

## National context

### 2.1 Legal framework, policies and regulations on gender equality and women's empowerment in the Philippines

At the international level, the Philippines has ratified all major conventions on gender equality, including CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, the United Nations Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals.

At the regional level, the Philippines is at the forefront of promoting the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) community's gender equality and women's empowerment goals. The Philippines heads the ASEAN Committee on Women, which led the ASEAN Gender Mainstreaming Project, a comprehensive initiative that encompasses all three ASEAN community pillars: the ASEAN Political-Security Community, the ASEAN Economic Community



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

and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (Alqaseer *et al.*, 2021).

Gender equality and women's rights have also been enshrined in numerous laws and policies at the national level. The Constitution of the Philippines was adopted in 1987 and recognizes the role of women in nation-building under Article II, thus ensuring the fundamental equality of women and men before the law (Republic of the Philippines, 1987). The Constitution under Article XIII also specifically mentions women as a vulnerable group to be targeted with accessible medical goods and services, and stresses their right to work in safe and healthful conditions (Section 14), thus recognizing their work and services (Republic of the Philippines, 1987).

In 2009, the Government of the Philippines adopted the Magna Carta of Women (Republic Act No. 9710; Republic of the Philippines, 2009), which recognizes gender inequalities in Philippine society, and aims to recognize, protect and promote the rights of women. This legislation serves as a framework to guide the development of laws upholding the rights of women and girls (Alqaseer *et al.*, 2021). The Philippine Commission on Women, established in 1975 to act as a policymaking, coordination and oversight body on gender equality (PCW, 2019), also introduced the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Plan 2019–2025, which aims to (1) fully implement the Magna Carta of Women; (2) contribute to the inclusive development goal of the Philippine Development Plan 2017–2022; (3) advance the country towards achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, as laid out in the Philippine Plan for Gender-Responsive Development (1995–2025); and (4) facilitate the implementation of the country's international commitments, as outlined in CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Sustainable Development Goals and other relevant agreements (PCW, 2022). The Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Plan also contains a broad set of indicators to monitor the progress of gender equality and women's empowerment in the country and to target specific thematic areas relevant for gender and development (GAD) work in the Philippines, notably including fisheries.

Appropriate budgeting is critical to adequately fund gender plans, policies and programmes. The Philippines General Appropriations Act (1995) introduced the GAD budget, which aims to support the implementation of programmes, projects and policies focused on gender equality and women's rights. This act mandates that all government departments and agencies direct at least 5 percent of their annual budgets directly to gender projects and activities. The need for gender budgeting was further enshrined in the Magna Carta of Women and the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Plan (Cleofe, 2022). Collectively, these measures require government agencies to develop GAD plans, budgets and reports annually. They have also facilitated GAD at the local government level through capacity development, provision of technical assistance for gender analysis, and the integration of sex-disaggregated data collection in budgets and plans. However, despite these numerous legislative measures and monitoring instruments, challenges persist, including unequal capacities of GAD focal points and project implementers, insufficient tracking of GAD spending, limiting GAD only to women and limited use of GAD budgets (UNESCAP, 2018).

At the fisheries level, some acts and provisions have been developed to support gender mainstreaming in alignment with national level goals. The 1998 Fisheries Code promoted an integrated management of fishery resources to address the overexploitation of fish stocks and to alleviate poverty and improve food security of the Filipino population dependent on the fisheries sector, particularly people living in municipal areas. The protection of local

fisherfolk in municipalities represents one of the few explicit linkages with gender available in the Fisheries Code (1998), as women are included in the list of actors to be targeted with appropriate technology, research and adequate services, such as post-harvest facilities and marketing assistance (BFAR, 1998). With regard to the enhancement of productivity and market development in fisheries communities, the Fisheries Code states that the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) shall coordinate with local government units to enable women to engage in other fisheries and/or economic activities in order to contribute to the development of the sector (BFAR, 1998). Finally, the Code sets directives for women's participation in Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Councils; however, the vague indication to include "representatives of the youth and women sector" among the representatives of fisherfolk communities is not a strongly worded mandate to actively foster women's participation (BFAR, 1998).

In 2022, the Gender and Development Focal Point System was reconstituted to support the gender mainstreaming agenda of the BFAR; identify strategies, projects and activities that address gender issues based on the results of gender audits and analyses; ensure the submission and effective implementation of GAD programmes, projects and activities and efficient use of the GAD budget; and, finally, strengthen BFAR's partnerships to enhance gender mainstreaming (BFAR, 2022). Through the focal point system and BFAR's GAD plans, the bureau addresses a variety of issues, including sexual harassment, gender-based violence, workplace discrimination, trainings, human resources, health and wellness, and environmental protection (USAID Oceans, SEAFDEC and CTI-CFF/WLF, 2020).

In addition to national regulation on gender and fisheries, the Philippines also participates in the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries

Commission (WCPFC), a regional governance body dedicated to managing fish stocks, such as tuna and other highly migratory species, by addressing problems such as "unregulated fishing, overcapitalization, excessive fleet capacity, vessel reflagging to escape controls, insufficiently selective gear, unreliable databases and insufficient multilateral cooperation" (WCPFC, 2022). While the WCPFC's Harvest Strategy specifically mentions socioeconomic factors, it fails to call out gender as a cross-cutting issue in fisheries management. Additionally, while other civil society groups focusing on environmental sustainability do attend WCPFC meetings, there are no gender equality advocacy groups attending these meetings, thus omitting gender and women's rights as key voices in the management of large, commercially and socially valuable fish stocks (Barclay *et al.*, 2022).

## 2.2 Sociocultural and economic context

The Philippines has a thriving economy, with annual growth reaching up to 6.4 percent between 2010 and 2019 (World Bank, n.d.). Between 1985 and 2018, poverty in the Philippines fell from 49.2 percent to 16.7 percent, though it rose slightly to 20.3 percent in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic (World Bank, 2022). Although remaining high, the Gini coefficient reflecting income inequality has also been declining steadily, falling from 46.5 percent in 2012 to 42.3 percent in 2018, though this has likely increased during the pandemic (World Bank 2022). As of 2021, the Philippines had a Human Development Index value of 0.699, putting it in the medium human development category (UNDP, n.d.). However, this growth is not equally distributed; although the country is urbanizing, half of the population in the Philippines continues to live in rural areas where poverty rates reached 24.5 percent in 2018, compared to 9.3 percent in urban areas (World Bank, 2022).



## Socioeconomic statistics

Only **6.5 percent** of women in the Philippines **OWNED A HOUSE** in 2017 (World Bank, n.d.)

As of 2022, women represented only **31 percent** of land **CERTIFICATE HOLDERS** (PSA, 2022b)

Women spend **50 percent** more time than men on **CARE WORK**, averaging 12.5 hours per day (Sobritchea *et al.*, 2021)

During the COVID-19 pandemic, women **were three times** as likely as men to stop working due to caregiving responsibilities and were also more likely to **LOSE THEIR JOBS** (World Bank, 2021)

The Philippines scores high on gender equality when compared to other countries. The Philippines is ranked 19th on the 2022 Gender Gap Report, the highest-ranking country in Asia (World Economic Forum, 2022). However, while the Philippines has high scores in the education and health and survival indicators (0.997 and 0.979, respectively), the scores are much lower in economic opportunity and participation (0.794) and political empowerment (0.360). The Philippines is also ranked 101st on the United Nations Development Programme's Gender Inequality Index, with relatively high rates of maternal mortality and adolescent birth rates, and a significant gap between men's and women's participation in the labour force (UNDP, n.d.).

The country's sociocultural context reflects a collection of influences, as different waves of colonization have impacted Filipino culture. For example, one ongoing consequence of Spanish colonialism is the penetration of Catholicism into the country and the subsequent adoption of its gender roles and values, resulting in the Philippines being the only Christian nation in Asia (Alqaseer *et al.*, 2021). These values encourage a view of women as wives and mothers above all, and uphold a conservative ethos subjugating women to husbands, thus constraining opportunities for women's empowerment (Alqaseer *et al.*, 2021; Santiago, 2008). These values are also reflected in attitudes toward gender diversity and sexual orientation, such as the 2019 Supreme Court decision to uphold the ban on same-sex marriages, and the Filipino emphasis on beauty standards, which includes an ongoing preoccupation with fair skin (Alqaseer *et al.*, 2021).

Beyond Christianity, the Philippines also has a significant Muslim population and many indigenous groups, all of whom carry their own gender norms which influence Filipino society overall (Alqaseer *et al.*, 2021).

These values continue to be perpetuated in Filipino society, impacting women's and girls' education and employment opportunities. In 2019, Filipino girls reported "marriage or family matters" as the main reason for dropping out of school, while boys chose "employment" as the prevalent choice. In fact, the labour force participation rate among women within the economically active population is 53.3 percent, which is significantly lower than the 74.9 percent for men (PSA, 2022a). When women in the Philippines are employed, they are most likely to fall into vulnerable employment and have a higher chance of losing their jobs when faced with shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic

## BOX 1

### Gender-based discrimination and violence against women

- Approximately one-quarter of women in the Philippines experience intimate partner violence\*
- 17 percent of women have experienced physical violence by a partner.\*\* The risks are highest among older women as well as among women in the lower income percentiles, compounding their vulnerability.\*\*
- Women migrant workers in the Philippines have reported both physical and sexual harassment and violence.\*\*\*
- Domestic violence was exacerbated by lockdown measures during the COVID-19 pandemic.\*\*\*

Notes: \*Marquez, M., Laguna, E., Kabamalan, M., & Cruz, G. 2020, October 15. *Estimating the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on key sexual and reproductive health outcomes in the Philippines*. University of the Philippines Population Institute (UPPI); \*\*PSA. 2018. *Philippines National Demographic and Health Survey 2017*. Quezon City, Philippines; \*\*\*Alqaseer, S., Antonio, A.M., Belonguel, S., Centeno, A.L., Cortina, D., Howell, M., & Porras, C. 2021. *Gender Country Profile for the Philippines 2021*. Quezon City, Philippines, University of the Philippines Center for Women's Studies Foundation.

(Alqaseer *et al.*, 2021). This vulnerability also contributes to the feminization of poverty, with women representing higher percentages of the poor as compared to their men counterparts (Alqaseer *et al.*, 2021).

With regard to the fisheries sector, the Philippines ranked among the top 10 countries in fish production in 2019, constituting around 2 percent of total world production by metric tonnes (SEAFDEC, 2022; BFAR, 2021). The main three categories in the Filipino fisheries sector are commercial fisheries, municipal fisheries and aquaculture (SEAFDEC, 2022). People involved in fisheries within municipalities are engaged in a wide range of activities, including capture fisheries, fish farming or aquaculture, fish processing, fish vending and gleaning. However, capture fisheries accounts for nearly half of the workforce's main occupation (BFAR, 2021). Poverty is particularly high in fishing communities, reaching 26.2 percent in 2018, far above the national average (PSA, 2020).

## 2.3 Sex-disaggregated data – Employment

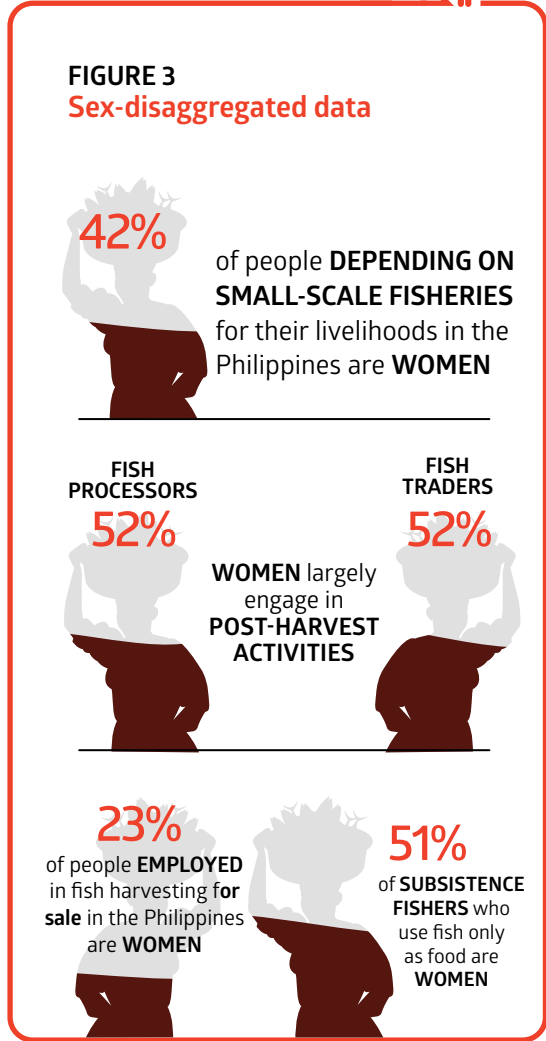
To understand the opportunities and constraints of women and men in fisheries, reliable gender data are needed across a variety of issues and indicators to provide insights into their roles, resources and power dynamics. The Philippines has implemented a number of laws and policies to develop gender statistics in the country to capture these data. The Magna Carta of Women mandates the collection and maintenance of a gender and development database, which includes gender data and gender analysis. An example of this effort is the 2013 Republic Act No. 10625, also known as the Philippine Statistical Act of 2013, which reorganized the national statistical system and led to the creation of the Philippine Statistics Authority, while pushing for the integration of a gender perspective in the collection and compilation of statistics, including the support for indicators from the Magna Carta of Women (PCW, 2019).

Various agencies have been coordinated to conduct data collection through new surveys to produce more robust baseline data at the national level, especially regarding time use, gender-based violence and asset ownership (PCW, 2019). As a result of these efforts, the Philippines has produced a robust set of gender data, with numerous key indicators tracked in a sex-disaggregated manner in conformance with international standards, including poverty rates, unemployment and labour force participation, literacy and education, gender-based violence and national leadership (Open Data Watch, Data2x and UNESCAP, 2021). Collectively, these data provide a strong basis upon which to evaluate the state of gender equality in the Philippines and to identify entry points for action.

However, some gender data gaps continue to persist in the Philippines. For example, official gender data are lacking concerning social protection, land tenure rights and average wages by occupation, all of which have strong gender implications (Open Data Watch, Data2x and UNESCAP, 2021). Other data gaps include access to drinking water and sanitation services, reporting and remediation of violence, access to physical and digital infrastructure, and data about social norms (Open Data Watch, Data2x and UNESCAP, 2021). The lack of sex-disaggregated data about these fundamental components of life in the Philippines means that women's needs and constraints are likely to be underreported and poorly understood, making it difficult to develop appropriate policies. Targeted interventions are being implemented to address administrative gaps and to harmonize existing statistics through the standardization of data collection forms (PCW, 2019). Additionally, although the Philippine Statistics Authority has been at the forefront of developing several knowledge products targeting gender statistics and sex-disaggregated data, gender data are not consistently used for the production of gender-

responsive policies, programmes and projects (PCW, 2019).

At the fisheries level, women's presence in official government statistics is historically underrepresented in the employment figures, for example, for activities related to the trading of fish products (Santiago, 2008). According to a study done by gender experts in the region,



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





© FAO/David Hogshot

sex-disaggregated data in tuna fisheries have significant gaps, particularly in “(a) small-scale tuna fisheries and informal value chain workers; (b) crew numbers on distant water fishing fleets; (c) fishing company, port, processing and ancillary services employment...; and (d) all forms of trading” (Barclay *et al.*, 2022, p. 587).

The Government of the Philippines has attempted to shed light on women’s participation in the fisheries sector through the creation of the Fisherfolk Registration System (FishR), a comprehensive database of fishers, including women, which can support the development of more strategic and inclusive programmes targeting women involved in the sector. In addition, this information is considered crucial to acquire a better view of potential beneficiaries for government support, such as access to credit, training, information and extension services (Alqaseer

*et al.*, 2021). The Philippines supports fisherfolk register with their local Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources in the Municipal Fisherfolk Registration. Incentives such as a Philippines Health (Philhealth) insurance number, crop insurance coverage and other benefits are offered to encourage fishers to register. However, most fishers who register are men. The incentives have also generated some false data, as people not engaged in fishing activities have registered in order to access the offerings (Mutia *et al.*, 2020). Many barriers persist for women fisherfolk to access registration in national and local databases, as the requirements are not adapted to women’s situations and needs at the local levels, deadlines can be a limitation to the registration process, and women are often discouraged from registering (Alqaseer *et al.*, 2021; Ofreño and Illo, 2020).

# 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 project on small-scale fisheries led by FAO.<sup>1</sup> Primary data were collected in the Philippines between 28 March 2022 and 25 April 2022. The data collection methods included individual questionnaires (n = 302), focus group discussions (n = 8) and key informant interviews (n = 9). Respondents to the individual questionnaires were women only, while men were included among the participants of the focus group discussions. The study took place in two regions and four districts in the Philippines: the Misamis Oriental

(in particular, the Alubijid and Gitagum Districts) and the Misamis Occidental (in particular, Lopez Jaena and Sinacaban Districts) in Mindanao.

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 was used to shed light on women's contributions in small-scale fisheries and to better understand gender dynamics in fisheries in the Philippines, both to validate data from the small-scale fisheries surveys and to provide additional context for clarifying gender dynamics in Filipino fisheries.

---

<sup>1</sup> The data for this brief were collected as part of a FAO small-scale fisheries study conducted under the FAO Flexible Volunteer Contributions (FVC, formerly the Flexible Multi-Partner Mechanism, FMM) sub-programme titled Implementing the Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines for gender-equitable and climate-resilient food systems and livelihoods (FMM/GLO/155/MUL), which was designed as a continuation of the activities implemented under the Empowering women in small-scale fisheries for sustainable food systems project (FGCP/GLO/645/NOR) funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (FAO, forthcoming).



# 4

## Gender in the small-scale fisheries value chains

### 4.1 Understanding gender and the role of women in small-scale fisheries in the Philippines

In the Philippines, women and men working in the fisheries sector occupy a variety of roles, strongly influenced by gender norms and beliefs. As in many countries, men do most of the fish harvesting, particularly vessel-based fishing. In fact, a gender analysis of tuna fisheries in the Philippines found that no women work on commercial tuna fishing vessels (USAID, 2018). In commercial tuna fisheries, men also engage in post-harvest work as paid labourers for sorting, weighing and classifying fish (Pavo and Digal, 2017). Men also work as intermediaries (*jambaleros*) and traders (USAID, 2018).

Women play vital roles in fisheries, but are generally limited to tasks that are conducive to their household and care responsibilities. In municipal fisheries, this includes pre- and postharvest activities, such as preparing food for excursions, cleaning and drying fishing gear and equipment, processing fish and fish by-products, and marketing and trading fish after it is landed (Torell *et al.*, 2021; Ocampo and Binondo, 2022; Barclay *et al.*, 2022; USAID 2018; FAO, forthcoming-a). In commercial fisheries, women are also employed in various tasks, although their roles are more confined. Women constitute 40 percent of workers in the post-harvest activities of small-scale fisheries;

nearly 80 percent of workers in tuna canning facilities are women, while men are only hired during peak season for physically demanding work (Prieto-Carolino *et al.*, 2021). In tuna ports and trading complexes, women perform tasks such as inspection and quality control, recording and reporting, and packaging and labelling. Like men, some women also work as intermediaries and traders (USAID, 2018).

The division of labour in fisheries is reflective of gender beliefs dictating how women and men are expected to behave. There is a common belief in the Philippines that the act of fishing, particularly vessel-based fishing, is men's work. This idea is based on the assumption that men are physically stronger than women and are thus more suited for dangerous work such as fishing (Torell *et al.*, 2021; Ocampo and Binondo, 2022; Barclay *et al.*, 2022). Women's bodies are also considered ill-equipped for fishing – there are beliefs that they will get seasick offshore, and pregnant women are considered bad luck on fishing vessels (Torell *et al.*, 2021; Ocampo and Binondo, 2022; USAID, 2018).

On the other hand, women are preferred for processing work in commercial facilities because of the belief that they are more detail oriented and perseverant than men. In some cases, women are considered better marketers because they are believed to have stronger negotiating skills (USAID, 2018).

Women's involvement in fisheries is also informed by gender norms that leave women responsible for the majority of domestic and care work. Household work is seen as women's duty rather than a choice (Torell *et al.*, 2021). In fact, women's household responsibilities are often not considered work and may be demeaned by men, with some comparing women to informal domestic helpers and others viewing women's work as a natural extension of women themselves. Women's workload is thus substantially greater than that of men, as they balance their productive and community work with their household and reproductive tasks (Ocampo and Binondo, 2022). Women often manage household finances – while this does give women a degree of economic independence, women are also tasked with overcoming financial deficits in the case of low catch or low prices to meet their household needs, thus increasing their burden (Ocampo and Binondo, 2022).

While women play many important roles in fisheries, their contributions are underrecognized and undervalued because of norms that construct their participation as complementary to their husbands or as an extension of their household responsibilities (Torell *et al.*, 2021; Ocampo and Binondo, 2022). Women may also work in the informal sector outside of traditional value chains, such as when processing fish by-products, which often means their work is viewed as marginal and not accounted for in value chain analyses or fisheries policy (Pavo and Digal, 2017). Women's income from fisheries is often considered supplementary to their husbands (Pavo and Digal, 2017); in municipal fisheries, this is reflected in women's unpaid labour which is encapsulated in their husbands' income (USAID, 2018). This devaluation serves to justify the household division of labour, since men are viewed as breadwinners and are thus excused

from household chores. Women's work is considered less physically demanding than men's, which enables a narrative in which men are allowed to rest after returning from fishing expeditions while women do the post-harvest work of cleaning and processing fish in addition to their other responsibilities (Torell *et al.*, 2021; Ocampo and Binondo, 2022).

Women who work in the fisheries sector also occupy insecure positions with limited access to benefits. Although women represent the majority of processing workers in the tuna canning facilities, many of them are employees of cooperatives rather than the canneries, which undermines their labour rights as the companies can avoid collective bargaining agreements. These discriminatory practices are further seen in the dismissal of pregnant women workers from their jobs at processing facilities (Prieto-Carolino *et al.*, 2021), demonstrating the need to involve women and men in fishery governance to establish gender-responsive policies.

This division of labour disadvantages both women and men. For example, both sexes are prevented from learning new skills – in the General Santos tuna processing sector, women expressed interest in learning about new processing technologies, but did not have access to this. On the other hand, while men do rigorous physical work, they do not learn skills such as financial record-keeping or the ability to read legal documents (Prieto-Carolino *et al.*, 2021). Similarly, the division of labour also imposes unrealistic expectations on men, who may struggle to provide financially for their families because of marginalization, poverty and external shocks (Ocampo and Binondo, 2022). Gender transformative approaches that promote sharing of household and productive tasks and expanding women's access to assets and decision-making spaces could help to

reduce gendered expectations placed on both women and men while supporting women's rights and empowerment.

However, the gender roles in fisheries are not fixed; for example, one study found that most respondents believe men should help with fish processing, which is traditionally women's work (Yap *et al.*, 2017). In some communities, men will help with processing if the catch is particularly large and will also participate in alternative occupations, such as tiger grass farming with their wives when household income is scarce (Torell *et al.*, 2021; Ocampo and Binondo, 2022). Similarly, while the general perception is that men do the fishing and women do pre- and post-harvest activities, women also participate in harvesting, in particular gleaning and nearshore fishing. Torell *et al.* (2021) also found that women would go out on boats to fish when their husbands were sick, demonstrating the flexibility of gender roles. Kleiber, Harris and Vincent (2018) corroborated these findings; their study found that as many as 20 percent of women went out on fishing boats with their husbands and 50 percent of men glean fish, demonstrating the fluidity of gender roles and the opportunity for gender transformative approaches to address existing gender beliefs that restrict the options available to both women and men.

## 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 varying degrees of empowerment that women can benefit from to ensure that their voice is heard.

Decision-making in the Philippines fisheries sector is generally divided along gender lines, with women and men respectively making decisions about the activities in which they participate. At the household level, women

make decisions about food, budgeting, health and domestic matters, while both women and men contribute to decisions about their children's education and discipline (USAID, 2018). In contrast, in fisheries operations, men have more decision-making power by making more decisions themselves and also having more influence over decisions made by their wives. In areas where they are more represented such as fish marketing, women have a larger role in decision-making although men are also involved and consulted (USAID, 2018).

Although women make or contribute to decisions about the household and some productive activities, much of the decision-making power about women's strategic needs rests with men. For example, women processors in the Philippines reported needing their husbands' permission to seek employment outside of the home (USAID, 2018). Similarly, although women who own trading operations make most decisions about their businesses, they also consult their husbands as a sign of respect for the head of household. Men do not report consulting their wives before making major business decisions (USAID, 2018). In this regard, almost 53 percent of women consulted in the FAO small-scale fisheries study confirmed having a low level of decision-making power over how income deriving from fishing activities is spent at the household level (FAO, forthcoming-a).

Women are under-represented in decision-making in large-scale fishery and institutional spaces. In frozen tuna facilities, men owners make the decisions about financing, buying and pricing. Women and men managers are also responsible for different decisions; men determine the tuna supplier and the hiring and training of workers, while women decide the volume and schedule of production (USAID, 2018). While men are more likely to own and

lead large operations, women own small value-added operations and have less power in the market; they are also less represented in industry-wide associations such as SOCKSARGEN Federation of Fishing and Allied Industries, Inc., an alliance of mostly medium- and large-scale fishing businesses (Prieto-Carolino *et al.*, 2021). A study in the Philippines also found that this under-representation extends to local politics; respondents generally agreed that women are not equitably represented in politics (Torell *et al.*, 2021), and most who are in politics are related to and seen as extensions of men politicians (personal communication, 2023). While men attributed this inequality to being more fit for politics and more self-confident, women said that not enough women run for office, potentially because of insufficient time owing to their household and care responsibilities (Torell *et al.*, 2021). Women's persistent exclusion from decision-making undermines the ability of companies and governments to respond to women's needs while also depriving these groups of women's insights and knowledge.

Beyond their roles in the value chains, there are also gender differences between women and men in representation in fisheries management. In the Lagonoy Gulf, tuna fisheries at the local level are organized into tuna fishing associations (TFAs). These associations participate in local fisheries governance, help develop mechanisms to support tuna fishers to become licensed and registered, try to increase awareness of tuna markets (price, value, etc.), and mobilize the community and distribute aid during disasters. TFA membership is male-dominated, with very few positions being held by women, and the monthly meetings focus primarily on fish harvesting and related issues, such as fish handling and logistics. This means that women's contributions go unrecognized, and their interests and needs are not addressed in these institutions which mediate their access

to information and support. In a study in the region, many women expressed the desire for more representation and recognition in TFAs, with some suggesting they should form their own groups (Ocampo and Binondo, 2022). Similarly, in Filipino communities with marine protected areas (MPAs), Kleiber, Harris, and Vincent (2018) found that MPA management committees primarily focused on men's fishing activities. Although women and men equally reported attending these meetings, men were more likely to actively participate than women, who often attended in their husbands' place, indicating that their attendance and participation are considered ancillary to the main purpose of the meetings. Women's primary reasons for not attending meetings were lack of membership in the MPA organization, as well as the simple fact that they are not men or fishermen – illustrating in clear terms that MPA management is considered a space for men.

When women participate in fisheries management, their experiences and outcomes differ from those of men. For example, in a study across three sites in the Philippines, most participants agreed that women should participate in fisheries management and enforcement; however, most lead wardens monitoring fishery regulation compliance are men, and women reported receiving less respect when reporting violators (Torell *et al.*, 2021). These behaviours reflect gendered attitudes around men's and women's roles, as men are considered to be more appropriate enforcers of fisheries regulations (USAID, 2018). Most leadership positions in fisheries associations are held by men, while women play supporting roles, which can be attributed to gendered beliefs that men are more natural leaders in comparison to women (Torell *et al.*, 2021). These gendered beliefs and subsequent discriminatory behaviours serve to exclude women from fisheries governance and enforcement spaces

by creating an atmosphere where women are devalued and their voices disregarded.

### 4.3 (Equal) rights, access and control over resources

The ability to access and own productive assets is clearly linked with decision-making power within the household, as to own assets means to be responsible for decisions about their acquisition, use and disposal. Access to and control over resources is also tied to livelihood opportunities and resilience, as assets facilitate entrepreneurship and investment and can encourage diversification and improved practices. However, access to and control over resources often reflect gender inequalities.

In a study across three areas in the Philippines, Torell *et al.* (2021) found that no marine resources were solely accessed by women. The percentage of resources solely accessed by men varied across sites, ranging from 38 percent to 68 percent. The remaining resources were either accessed by both women and men or were not used by either gender. Women have less access to marine resources than men, which limits their economic opportunities. This trend is also clearly reflected at the household level: although women in the FAO small-scale fisheries study showed a slight prevalence in ownership of assets such as means of communication, handling and storage, tools and processing assets, the study highlighted a persistent degree of joint ownership with husbands for all kinds of fisheries assets (FAO, forthcoming-a).

In addition to having less access to marine resources, women also rely on different resources than do men for their livelihoods. While both women and men in the sector need access to fish, people working in the small-scale post-harvest sector, most of whom are women, also require access to productive resources, such as energy and water to clean and dry

fish. Particularly in small-scale operations and municipal fisheries, processors are dependent on natural resources such as energy from the sun and water from wells for their processing activities. As a result, they are more vulnerable to increasing competition and unpredictable weather patterns that reduce the security of their access to these resources (Sumagaysay, 2017).

Since men are responsible for the majority (though not all) of fish harvesting, women often access fish through their relationships with men. This indirect access to fish has consequences on women's ability to perform their household responsibilities since lower fish catch means that families have less income to meet their needs, which increases women's burden to both feed their families and to cover household expenses. Women in the Philippines often manage household finances, so they are tasked with finding other means of accessing money, such as taking out loans, when fish catch is low (Torell *et al.*, 2021). Research has found that women traders take larger risks than men traders and will take out loans from informal financiers with high interest rates (USAID, 2018).

Women's primary role in household budgeting is reflected in their access to credit and gendered attitudes around lending. In a study across multiple sites in the Davao Gulf, 64 percent of women stated they had access to credit. Women accessed credit through both formal and informal institutions. Borrowed money was usually used as start-up funding to purchase materials for fishing or other businesses, to buy fishing equipment, to purchase food, or for other household expenses (Macusi *et al.*, 2022; Mutia *et al.*, 2020). Women self-reported having better access to credit than men, which may reflect institutional beliefs that women are more likely to repay loans (Macusi *et al.*, 2022). In some cases, women end up in debt cycles



wherein they are forced to take out new loans to repay existing loans (Torell *et al.*, 2021). Mutia *et al.* (2020) also note that although women may be responsible for procuring loans, this does not guarantee that they have control over the use of resulting funds.

Research also shows that low fish catch and the subsequent loss in income increase tensions in the household and can lead to both verbal altercations and physical abuse, as well as increased alcohol consumption by men (Torell *et al.*, 2021). Torell *et al.* (2021) noted that in their focus group discussions, mixed-gender groups were less likely to acknowledge that physical violence occurred and were more likely to blame women for tensions in the household, for example, by stating that women did not trust their husbands. However, in segregated focus groups, women stated that low fish catch contributes to illegal fishing, alcohol use and physical violence. These discrepancies highlight the impact of gender dynamics on research findings while also illustrating the complex interconnections between resources, gender and interpersonal relationships, which often disproportionately harm women.

Women's access to capital and other resources is critical to their ability to start their own businesses and upgrade their facilities. Women in Lagonoy Gulf, Philippines, viewed capital and equipment as two of the main constraints preventing them from starting their own businesses (Ocampo and Binondo, 2022). While women have secure access to credit, they are more likely to use these funds for household needs, whereas men reserve some funds for other expenses (Prieto-Carolino *et al.*, 2021). Women also struggle to access equipment for their fishery activities, such as raised drying racks and refrigerators (FAO, forthcoming-a). As a result, women may be impeded from starting or upgrading their businesses, limiting their income and economic empowerment.

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

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

In the fishery sector, Filipino women actively participate in post-harvest processes and are prominent in these spaces. Men and women traders lease space in fishery landing areas, and both women and men are employed as paid workers in fishing ports, but have different roles. Women are more likely to be involved in sorting, checking and administrative work, as this is detail-oriented work that is considered appropriate for women, while men work in unloading, hauling and classifying fish (Pavo and Digal, 2017).

While both women and men in the Philippines engage in fish trade, some research has shown that men typically sell fish with high commercial value, while women trade in lower-value species (Mutia *et al.*, 2020). In Lake Taal, men also sell higher volumes of fish, which is particularly important during seasons of low catch, as over 70 percent of women traders sell less than 5 kg of fish per day while only 20 percent of men sell the same amount (Mutia *et al.*, 2020).

Similarly, women traders in Lake Taal generally sell fish in local markets or neighbouring barangays, while men traders often have access to motorized boats and can therefore sell in larger markets further away. If women traders wish to sell their fish at the large public markets, they have to pay to transport the fish or sell to intermediaries who dictate the buying price (Mutia *et al.*, 2020). In the General Santos tuna fishery, both women and men said households were their primary markets, but men had access to more diversified markets, such as



## 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 also be relevant factors to be considered, just as inadequate equipment and lack of infrastructure. “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.”\*\*

Women and men who are reliant on fishery resources for their livelihood are at risk of losing up to 100 percent of their investments when faced with shocks, such as climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic.\*\*\* Fish processors, most of whom are women, risk fish spoilage due to unpredictable weather patterns that may prevent them from drying fish, resulting in lost income.\*\*\*\* To reduce this risk, fisherfolk can be supported to access gender-responsive technologies that improve the storage, processing and transportation of fish along the value chain.

Notes: \*FAO. 2018. *Gender and food loss in sustainable food value chains – A guiding note*. Rome, FAO; \*\*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; \*\*\*USAID. 2018. *Gender Analysis of the Fisheries Sector*. The USAID Oceans and Fisheries Partnership. National Network on Women in Fisheries in the Philippines. General Santos City, Philippines; \*\*\*\* Sumagaysay, M.B. 2017. *The Water-Energy-Food Nexus: Women’s Lens for Fisheries Security*. Asian Fisheries Science Special Issue, 30: 221-229.

local restaurants, supermarkets and vendors. Women in this study noted that their household responsibilities prevented them from accessing larger, more profitable markets, so men traders had higher incomes (USAID, 2018). Gender differences in business ownership also impact access to larger markets – in General Santos, women were likely to own small value-added processing operations, but were less likely to own or lead the larger canning and frozen product facilities. This disparity in operations impedes women’s access to markets; while most of the larger operations are registered with the Food and Drug Administration and are HACCP compliant, the small value-added operations are not (Prieto-Carolino *et al.*, 2021). Gender inequality in access to assets and the gender division of labour restrict equitable access to markets, further perpetuating inequitable livelihood outcomes.

Alongside access to markets, access to information is crucial so that women and men can negotiate fair terms and improve their practices. A study in General Santos found that women traders had more diverse sources of information than men; while men relied on television programmes, their friends and other traders, women also drew on the government, the internet and local trade shows (USAID, 2018). Diversified sources of information support the improvement of fisheries practices and more equitable trade, so extension services, trainings and other outreach programmes should continue to be expanded to reach women and men across the value chain.

Sexual harassment is also a common problem in fisheries, making workplaces unsafe for women and depriving them of their rights to safety and dignity in these spaces. In General

Santos Fish Port Complex, sexual harassment is reportedly common. However, in the absence of formal channels for grievances and remediation, women are forced to take individual measures to address the issue, such as publicly shaming their harasser (USAID, 2018). This solution places demands on women's emotional labour while failing to document and regulate the behaviour. Similarly, fish trading companies often do not have policies to address sexual harassment nor guidance on how to handle such cases, which leaves women vulnerable to abuse with no protection or recourse (USAID, 2018; Prieto-Carolino *et al.*, 2021). Sexual harassment violates women's right to decent work and should be addressed at all levels of fisheries value chains.

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

Women spend more time on household work and less time on income-generating work than

men. Since women's work is considered light, they are expected to continue working while men rest after returning from fishing, limiting women's leisure, rest and productivity time (Torell *et al.*, 2021). In formal workplaces, the household gender division of labour is reflected in worker productivity. Women report fewer absences than men, and the reasons for their absences differ; while women will report missing work to care for a child, men are more likely to miss work because of social activities (Prieto-Carolino *et al.*, 2021). Women's unpaid labour burden constrains their economic empowerment in both entrepreneurial and paid employment spaces, so the redistribution of care and domestic work and increased access to social care services, alongside other interventions to free women's time, could increase economic productivity and household income.

To reduce the disproportionately large work burden women bear and to create opportunities that were formerly inaccessible to them, it is



##### BOX 3

#### Gender Transformative Approaches: addressing the root causes of gender inequalities and discrimination

The influence of patriarchal customs on Filipino 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 long-standing 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.

important to enhance their access to information on improved practices, appropriate and gender-sensitive technologies and infrastructure. Indeed, capacity development and technology can be key drivers for women's empowerment by making their contribution to the value chain more effective. Gender transformative approaches can be a powerful tool in tackling these and other relevant issues in the small-scale fisheries value chain by addressing the root causes of discrimination affecting women (Box 3).

In fishing communities in the Davao Gulf, about half of women respondents reported receiving technical assistance from the government, including information on financing and training on new methods of production, as well as financial and material support. Women also emphasized the value of this assistance and their desire to continue receiving these services (Macusi *et al.*, 2022). Women consulted in the FAO small-scale fisheries study also stressed the lack of training opportunities related to the use of improved technologies, as in the majority of cases fish value addition was brought by self-learning (7 percent) or knowledge shared by parents (5 percent) (FAO, forthcoming-a). In some tuna fishing communities, both women and men access trainings on fishery value chains provided by the BFAR. However, the BFAR also distributes fishing equipment such as boats and gears, which only benefit men (USAID, 2018). Capacity development initiatives should be tailored to the needs of women and men across the value chain and should include not only targeted trainings but also the distribution of equipment and resources to address gender-based constraints.

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

Gender norms lead women and men to play different roles in fisheries, which means that

they also use and control natural resources in distinct ways. A study across Palawan, Occidental Mindoro and Batangas provinces in the Philippines found that perceptions of how environmental resources benefit the community differed by gender (Graziano, Pollnac and Christie, 2018). For example, women valued mangroves for firewood and building materials, while men considered mangroves and coral reefs beneficial since they act as nurseries for fisheries. These benefits reflect the gendered uses of mangrove resources – women collect firewood from these areas and men use them to fish. The way women and men use mangroves also has implications for conservation: while men may benefit from preservation initiatives, women could be disadvantaged by regulations restricting cutting and collecting firewood (Graziano, Pollnac and Christie, 2018). Conservation and other climate change measures must be preceded by gender analyses and accompanied by appropriate gender adaptation plans in order to ensure that women are not further disadvantaged.

Gendered resource use patterns also impact perceptions of climate change and its effects on fishery livelihoods. In one study, men were more likely than women to believe that their assets and livelihoods were at risk due to climate change impacts and resource degradation. Men specifically believed that their assets and livelihoods were threatened by coral bleaching and overfishing. Both women and men believed they were at risk because of flooding, coastal erosion and ocean tides. The gender differences in risk perception may be explained by livelihoods and identity: men in the study communities were more likely to identify as fisherfolk and be dependent on fisheries for their livelihoods. Since coral bleaching threatens near and offshore fisheries, but is less associated with intertidal gleaning (an activity conducted by women), it follows that men would perceive this risk more than women. Since the

risk of flooding, erosion and tides is less specific to offshore fishing, it makes sense that women and men would perceive these risks equally (Graziano, Pollnac and Christie, 2018).

Access to information about climate change influences how individuals act and their capacity to respond to threats posed by shifting weather patterns, environmental degradation and biodiversity loss. One study in the Davao Gulf found that access to information contributed to support for closed fishing season policies, highlighting the connection between information and climate adaptation strategies (Macusi *et al.*, 2022). According to another study in the Philippines, women are more likely than men to be aware of municipal

and community climate change adaptation plans. Because women spend more time on household activities while men fish offshore for long periods of time, one explanation is that women's greater involvement in community activities increases their access to this information. Women are also responsible for marketing fish, which means they spend more time in markets, another potential source for information dissemination, and this theory is supported by evidence that individuals in villages with fish markets are more likely to be aware of adaptation plans (Graziano, Pollnac and Christie, 2018). Since women and men are differently impacted by climate change, it is important that they both have access to clear and relevant information so that they can

#### BOX 4

#### Effects of climate change



- Climate change is predicted to have a severe impact on the economy of the Philippines. With conservation measures, Suh and Pomeroy predict a 9 percent decrease in gross domestic product by 2060, while without adequate measures this decrease could be as high as 18 percent.\*
- Most fishers have seen a decrease in their fish catch as a result of climate change.\*\*
- Fishers in the Philippines have already begun to notice changes in weather patterns and sea level rise. Unpredictable severe weather events such as heavy rains or typhoons can cause flooding. These events impact fisherfolk's ability to fish and can damage gear, impacting income and food security.\*\*
- Men and women often use and access fishery resources differently, which can shape their perceptions of climate change impacts. Fisheries policy, disaster relief and climate change interventions need to include considerations of the resources women use and how they use them.\*\*\*

Notes: \*Suh, D. & Pomeroy, R. 2020. *Projected Economic Impact of Climate Change on Marine Capture Fisheries in the Philippines*. Mar. Sci. 7; \*\*Macusi, E. D., Macusi, E. S., Canales, C. M. G., Barboza, A., & Digal, L. N. 2022. *Women's participation and support for the implementation of the closed fishing season in Davao Gulf, Philippines*. Marine Policy, 143, 105133; \*\*\*Graziano, K., Pollnac, R., & Christie, P. 2018. *Wading past assumptions: gender dimensions of climate change adaptation in coastal communities of the Philippines*. Ocean & Coastal Management, 162, 24-33.

adapt accordingly, both as individuals and as a community.

Additionally, because women and men use natural resources in different ways, women also face distinct risks following natural disasters and other shocks. However, since the role of women in fisheries is often unrecognized and underreported, women are at risk of being omitted from disaster relief efforts, which can further marginalize women and other vulnerable populations. In a study investigating disaster relief following Typhoon Haiyan in northern Iloilo, Badayos-Jover (2017) found that disaster relief institutions spoke with village officials, primarily men, to assess needs; it was assumed that women's needs would be addressed through general community aid, which resulted in women's specific needs being overlooked. For example, the typhoon destroyed a community birthing centre in Bayas Island, including all of the equipment, leaving women without a place to give birth in the town. Much of the disaster aid also inadvertently supported men's livelihood, an instance being that though many boats were donated to the island because the economy is based on fishing, the resources and equipment necessary for women's fishery

activities were not provided. As this study exemplifies, when women are not explicitly included in resource governance and disaster relief, their needs are unlikely to be met.

As with most other aspects of the fisheries sector, climate change and natural resource management are also impacted by gender norms and gender beliefs. For example, when it comes to protecting the environment and safeguarding the resources on which communities depend for their livelihoods, women and men are expected to play different roles. According to a study across three sites in the Philippines, women are considered to be more suitable for coastal clean-up projects, echoing their domestic responsibilities, while men are permitted to act as guards and rangers (Torell *et al.*, 2021). When women participate in protection and enforcement, they experience harassment and physical violence (Trent and Tuirán, 2020). However, Torell *et al.* (2021) found that women and men across all sites in their study were open to women's involvement in fisheries management and enforcement, which is a positive finding that should be built upon to increase women's power in marine governance.

# 5

## Gender and small-scale fisheries stakeholders

### 5.1 Women in small-scale fisheries organizations

Understanding the existing structures, strengths and gaps of women's fishery organizations can support the design of effective interventions by increasing their capacity for collective action and by building women's power and leadership in community spaces.

In the Philippines, many women in fishery value chains are involved in an organization, most of which are village-level associations working with either small pelagic fish or invertebrates (FAO, forthcoming-b). According to a recent mapping survey of women's fishery organizations in the country, most of the associations already have effective governance and administrative structures with democratic rule-making procedures which facilitate the operations and sustainability of the organization. Most of the organizations were formed by the government, primarily the local or district governance bodies, and have the common objectives of increasing household income, improving social welfare, increasing visibility with the government and participating in fisheries management. Group members identified many benefits to participating in these organizations, including participation in decision-making, market access, technical training and access to fish, as well as empowerment and respect (FAO, forthcoming-b).

While these groups bring many benefits to women, they continue to face numerous barriers which hinder women's opportunities. Many groups lack access to the equipment needed for small-scale fisheries enterprise activities, such as high-quality raised drying racks and adequate storage space, which results in post-harvest losses due to rain or pests. Additionally, only half of the women's organizations are legally registered and few have bank accounts, which prevents them from accessing external financial and technical support (FAO, forthcoming-b). Only half of the groups in the study had participated in any formal fisheries governance activities, and they received infrequent government support through technical and extension services. Groups could benefit from regular government services along with support to formalize their organizations and access financial and productive assets (FAO, forthcoming-b).

In addition to women's groups, some women also participate in fisheries associations or other similar governance organizations. However, while both women and men technically have access to fishers' organizations, a study in Lake Taal found that most registered fishers and members of fisheries groups were men and that the services focused on men's activities (Mutia *et al.*, 2020). A study in the Davao Gulf similarly found that only about 25 percent

of women respondents were members of fishing organizations, as the majority felt that the organizations were meant for men, even though women frequently attended in their husbands' stead (Macusi *et al.*, 2022). Similarly, the FAO small-scale fisheries study found that women in the Philippines demonstrate a lower participation rate in fisheries organizations not only compared to men locally but also when compared to women living in the other countries involved in the study including Indonesia, Madagascar, and Namibia (FAO, forthcoming-a).

Despite these challenges, women in the Philippines have frequently and successfully formed organizations to advocate for their rights and their needs. Following Typhoon Haiyan, women in Iloilo, in the western Visayas region, formed an association to receive training and equipment for their processing

ventures. Over the course of a few years, the group reorganized in order to access funding, equipment, training and other support, and as of 2016, the group comprised two chapters with nearly 300 members (Badayos-Jover, 2017). The National Network on Women in Fisheries in the Philippines, Inc. (WINFISH) also actively champions women's rights and gender equality in fisheries and aquaculture by conducting research, providing training on gender and women's empowerment, providing extension work, and convening forums so that women's voices are heard in policy- and decision-making spaces (USAID, 2018). As these and other groups demonstrate, women's collective action can strengthen their voice and increase their access to crucial resources, so providing support and visibility to these groups can be an effective strategy for women's empowerment.





# 6

## Conclusions and recommendations – Gender needs and priorities

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

### Policy and legal framework

- **Support the registration** of women and men involved in fisheries value chains with the local government to increase their access to extension services, social security benefits and insurance. **Educate fishing communities** on the benefits of registration and provide support for communities barred by other factors such as time, distance and social norms.
- **Develop coastal resource management policies and plans that recognize women's equal rights to coastal resources** and that **facilitate women's active participation** in the management of resources, particularly resources used by or important to women in their productive, reproductive and community roles. The gender and development (GAD) plans and budgets of local government units (LGUs) and of BFAR should be harmonized and include explicit and gender transformative **activities and support for women fishers**, as well as for women throughout the supply chain. Existing policies such as the Fisheries

Code could also be revised to integrate gender issues, but also to align with the SSF guidelines, and consider women's barriers in small-scale fisheries throughout its provisions. Finally, the adoption of Harmonized GAD Guidelines should be strengthened to ensure **GAD plans act as the key tools for gender mainstreaming** in the fisheries sector.

- **Collaboration between BFAR and LGUs should be strengthened to facilitate gender mainstreaming activities.** The establishment of a gender desk and other gender focal points in LGUs can be fostered, building off and integrating with the BFAR Gender and Development Focal Point system. The GAD Focal Point system in BFAR regional and provincial offices should also be supported with specific gender expertise and resources. This could include developing standard job descriptions and job requirements for gender specialists across LGUs and other government agencies to build consistency in the implementation of gender mainstreaming activities.

### Knowledge generation and data collection systems

- **Build programmes and partnerships** between universities, research institutions, civil society and government agencies to conduct targeted research on gender and

fisheries across different fisheries and value chain nodes. Research should collect data to address existing gaps in knowledge, such as the gender dimensions of fisheries management, informal value chains, and knowledge of fisheries regulations and upgrading activities.

- **Incorporate the collection of sex- and age-disaggregated data across all forms of government data collection in the fisheries section.** This would include enhancing existing data collection systems such as FishR and BoatR to collect more comprehensive gender data.
- **Develop a central database with sex- and age-disaggregated data** covering fishery value chains and fishery governance to inform policymaking. **Establish systems to enable communication and data sharing** among government institutions, fisheries agencies and universities locally, nationally and regionally to draw upon the strengths and mandates of the various organizations in order to facilitate gender-responsive policies and programmes across fishery value chains. Provide **capacity development and technical assistance** to LGUs to facilitate the collection of sex-disaggregated data, as well as to assist in developing and implementing plans and budgets that meaningfully act upon these data.
- **Develop, publish and disseminate stories about women fishers, their struggles and achievements** to build recognition of women's roles and contributions in the fishery sector. These stories could be communicated through a variety of IEC (Information, Education and Communication) materials and Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) campaigns using media, such as magazines, social media and videos. Stories should highlight women

from a range of communities with different ages and socioeconomic backgrounds to showcase the diversity of women in the sector.

### **Behavioural change and gender transformative approaches**

- **Implement gender transformative approaches** to engage women, men and youth within the communities to **deconstruct gender norms and the predefined gender roles**, and to **address the gendered division of labour** in the Philippines small-scale fisheries in order to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment. These programmes should build on existing interventions and integrate with women's networks in the country already addressing gender inequalities in fisheries, such as WINFISH, Tambuyog Development Center and others.
- **Ensure regular, standardized gender sensitivity and gender mainstreaming training for BFAR and LGUs** to build widespread expertise within these offices, in addition to the GAD focal points. Trainings should be available for staff across a range of offices and teams to facilitate gender mainstreaming across the institutions. These trainings should include the **integration of gender analysis in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation** of programmes and project activities and communications.

### **Targeted interventions for women's empowerment**

- **Develop gender-responsive social protection, financing and credit programmes to support women's role in budgeting** in households and in the fisheries sector and to strengthen women's economic resilience. Oversight of lending should be extended to the informal sector

and recognize the patron-client nature of lending relationships. Support should also be provided to women's groups to identify and access financial support. Women fishers and their economic activities should be covered by crop insurance programmes.

- **Increase women's access to assets and spaces** that support and enhance their activities in fisheries value chains. Programmes such as grants and subsidies should be implemented to increase women business owners' and women's groups' access to key equipment and facilities that address gender-based constraints, such as refrigerators for storage, raised drying racks and fishing equipment. **Technologies that are responsive to women's needs**, particularly in the face of climate change and increased demand, should be developed, tested and disseminated in collaboration with women.
- **Develop gender-responsive policies and facilities** in workplaces to improve working conditions for women, including providing equipment to reduce women's health risks, providing spaces for nursing and child care, and increasing women's representation in leadership positions. **Policies should address and prevent sexual harassment and workplace discrimination** and should include complaints and remediation mechanisms with clear and transparent protocols. Policy development processes should actively include women and should reflect the needs of diverse groups.
- **BFAR and LGUs should support the formalization of women's fisheries organizations** and the registration of women fishers, and increase their access to services and resources that can support women's activities in fisheries, such as feeding programmes, health monitoring

services, social security, and life insurance. This can include assisting the groups to **formally register** with the Department of Labor and Employment and/or the Securities and Exchange Commission. In addition to groups, BFAR and LGUs should support women fishers to register with the National Program for Municipal Fisherfolk Registration to increase their access to insurance and other benefits, as well as to ensure they are accounted for in government programmes and statistics.

- Once registered, **women's groups** should receive support to open bank accounts, as well as **regular trainings on topics like fishing, nutrition improved processing practices, marketing, organizational management, and entrepreneurship**, along with ongoing support to strengthen their technical capacities and leadership opportunities. **Groups could also be supported to access external funding and/or in-kind donations** to increase their access to resources, such as capital, raised drying racks, refrigerators, boats and storage space.
- **Special interventions should be designed to support the most vulnerable women.** This includes women in conflict-afflicted areas or areas affected by natural disasters, as well as victims of sexual trafficking and forced prostitution in the fisheries sector. Interventions should be designed, considering the particular vulnerabilities of these groups. These women should be supported in accessing gender-responsive services to remediate harm, including social, financial and legal services, as necessary.

# References

- Alqaseer, S., Antonio, A.M., Belonguel, S., Centeno, A.L., Cortina, D., Howell, M. & Porras, C.** 2021. *Gender country profile for the Philippines 2021*. Quezon City, Philippines, University of the Philippines Center for Women's Studies Foundation.
- Badayos-Jover, M.B.P.** 2017. Security in adversity: highlighting coastal women's agency and efforts to organize after Haiyan. *Asian Fisheries Science Special Issue*, 30: 303–312. <https://doi.org/10.33997/j.afs.2017.30.S1.017>
- Barclay, K.M., Satapornvanit, A.N., Syddall, V.M. & Williams, M.J.** 2022. Tuna is women's business too: applying a gender lens to four cases in the Western and Central Pacific. *Fish and Fisheries*, 23(3): 584–600. doi:10.1111/faf.12634
- Biswas, N.** 2017. *Towards gender-equitable small-scale fisheries governance and development – A 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*. Rome, FAO.
- BFAR (Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources).** 1998. *The Philippines Fisheries Code of 1998, Republic Act No. 8550*.
- BFAR (Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources).** 2021. *Philippines Fisheries Profile 2020*. Quezon City, Manila.
- BFAR (Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources).** 2022. *Reconstitution of the Gender and Development (GAD) Focal Point System*. Quezon City, Philippines, Fisheries Office.
- Cleofe, J.T.** 2022. *Issue paper on women in fisheries*. Quezon City, Philippines, NGOs for fisheries reform.
- FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations).** n.d. *FAOLEX database: legislative database of national laws and regulations on food, agriculture and renewable natural resources*. Rome, FAO.
- FAO.** 2015. *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication*. Rome.
- FAO.** 2018. *Gender and food loss in sustainable food value chains – A guiding note*. Rome
- FAO.** Forthcoming-a. *Implementing the Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines for gender equitable and climate resilient food systems and livelihoods – Consolidated baseline report: Indonesia, Madagascar, Namibia and the Philippines*. Rome, FAO.
- FAO.** Forthcoming-b. *Mapping women's small-scale fisheries organizations in the Philippines: results from assessing current capacities, gaps and opportunities to strengthen women's organizations in the sector*. Rome, FAO.
- FAO, Duke University & WorldFish.** 2023. *Illuminating Hidden Harvests - The contributions of small-scale fisheries to sustainable development*. Rome, FAO.
- 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.
- Grassi, F., Landberg, J. & Huyer, S.** 2015. *Running out of time. The reduction of women's work burden in agricultural production*. Rome, FAO.
- Graziano, K., Pollnac, R. & Christie, P.** 2018. Wading past assumptions: gender dimensions of climate change adaptation in coastal communities of the Philippines. *Ocean & Coastal Management*, 162: 24–33. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ocecoaman.2018.01.029>
- Kleiber, D., Harris, L. & Vincent, A.C.** 2018. Gender and marine protected areas: a case study of Danajon Bank, Philippines. *Maritime Studies*, 17(2) : 163–175. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40152-018-0107-7>
- Macusi, E.D., Macusi, E.S., Canales, C.M.G., Barboza, A. & Digal, L.N.** 2022. Women's participation and support for the implementation of the closed fishing season in Davao Gulf, Philippines. *Marine Policy*, 143: 105–133. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2022.105133>

- Marquez, M., Laguna, E., Kabamalan, M. & Cruz, G.** 2020. *Estimating the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on key sexual and reproductive health outcomes in the Philippines*. University of the Philippines Population Institute, Quezon City, Philippines. <https://www.uppi.upd.edu.ph/sites/default/files/pdf/UPPI-Impact-of-COVID-19-on-SRH.pdf>
- Mutia, M.T.M., Magistrado, M.L., Fermanan, M.J.L. & Muyot, M.C.** 2020. Gender participation in the fisheries sector of Lake Taal, Philippines. *The Philippines Journal of Fisheries*, 27(2): 157–182. doi:10.31398/tjpf/27.2.2018A0001
- Ocampo, A. & Binondo, J.** 2022. Exploring gender dynamics in rural tuna fishing communities in the Lagonoy Gulf, Philippines. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 23(6). <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol23/iss6/8>
- Ofreneo, R.P. & Illo, J.I.** 2020. *Philippine NGO Beijing+25 Report*. University of the Philippines Center for Women's and Gender Studies, Quezon City, Philippines.
- Open Data Watch, Data2x & UNESCAP (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific).** 2021. *Bridging the gap: mapping gender data availability in Asia and the Pacific – Gender and data policies. Philippines*. <https://data2x.org/resource-center/bridging-the-gap-mapping-gender-data-availability-in-asia-and-the-pacific>
- Pavo, R.R. & Dugal, L.N.** 2017. Women's space in the Fish Port Tumbler Complex and the value-chain nodes of the fishing industry in General Santos City, Philippines. *Asian Fisheries Science Special Issue*, 30: 33–58. doi.org/10.33997/j.afs.2017.30.S1.002
- PCW (Philippine Commission on Women).** 2019. *Bpfa +25 Philippine Progress Report*. <https://library.pcw.gov.ph/2014-2019-philippine-progress-report-beijing-platform-for-action-bpfa-25>
- PCW (Philippine Commission on Women).** 2022. *Updated Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Plan 2019–2025*. Manila, Philippines. <https://library.pcw.gov.ph/updated-gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment-plan-2019-2025>
- PCW (Philippine Commission on Women).** n.d. *Gender and Development Budget*. <https://pcw.gov.ph/gad-budget-report>
- Prieto-Carolino, A., Siason, I.M., Sumagaysay, M.B., Gelvezon, R.P.L., Monteclaro, H.M. & Asong, R.H.** 2021. A gender analysis of the processing sector of the tuna value chain in General Santos City, Philippines. *Marine Policy*, 128: 104477. doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2021.104477
- PSA (Philippine Statistics Authority).** 2018. *Philippines National Demographic and Health Survey 2017*. <https://www.dhsprogram.com/publications/publication-fr347-dhs-final-reports.cfm>
- PSA.** 2020. *Farmers, fisherfolks, individuals residing in rural areas and children posted the highest poverty incidences among the basic sectors in 2018*. <https://psa.gov.ph/poverty-press-releases/nid/162541>
- PSA.** 2021. *Food balance sheets (FBS) of the Philippines. Quezon City, Philippines*.
- PSA.** 2022a. *Employment rate in October 2022 is estimated at 95.5 percent*. <https://psa.gov.ph/content/employment-rate-october-2022-estimated-955-percent>
- PSA.** 2022b. *Agriculture: fact sheet on women and men*. <https://psa.gov.ph/gender-stat/wmf/6.%20Agriculture>
- 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. doi.org/10.4060/cb8399en
- Republic of the Philippines.** 1987. *Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines, 1987*.

- Republic of the Philippines.** 2009. *The Magna Carta of Women (Republic Act No. 9710)*, 2009.
- Santiago, C.** 2008. *Philippines: country gender profile*. Japan International Cooperation Agency.
- SEAFDEC (Southeast Asian Fisheries and Development Center).** 2022. Fisheries Country Profile, Philippines. [www.seafdec.org/fisheries-country-profile-philippines-2022](http://www.seafdec.org/fisheries-country-profile-philippines-2022)
- Sobritchea, C.I., Lacsamana, L.R., Antollno, P.N.A., Hermoso, F.V.M. & Maranan, C.** 2021. *The 2021 National Household Care Survey*. The Philippines, Oxfam Pilipinas, UN Women and the Philippine Commission on Women.
- Suh, D. & Pomeroy, R.** 2020. Projected economic impact of climate change on marine capture fisheries in the *Philippines*. *Mar. Sci.*, 7. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2020.00232>
- Sumagaysay, M.B.** 2017. The water-energy-food nexus: women's lens for fisheries security. *Asian Fisheries Science Special Issue*, 30: 221–229. [doi.org/10.33997/j.afs.2017.30.S1.011](https://doi.org/10.33997/j.afs.2017.30.S1.011)
- Torell, E., Castro, J., Lazarte, A. & Bilecki, D.** 2021. Analysis of gender roles in Philippine fishing communities. *Journal of International Development*, 33(1): 233–255. [doi: 10.1002/jid.3520](https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.3520)
- Trent, S. & Tuirán, R.A.** 2020. *Video: In this Philippine community, women guard a marine protected area*. Mongabay. <https://news.mongabay.com/2020/09/video-in-this-philippine-community-women-guard-a-marine-protected-area>
- UNDP (United Nations Development Programme),** n.d. *Gender Inequality Index*. Cited 23 March 2022. [hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii](https://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii)
- UNESCAP (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific).** 2018. *Gender-responsive budgeting in Asia and the Pacific: key concepts and good practices*. Thailand, UNESCAP.
- UN Women.** 2020. *Women's economic empowerment in fisheries in the blue economy of the Indian Ocean rim: a baseline report*. New York City, UN Women.
- USAID.** 2018. *Gender analysis of the fisheries sector*. The USAID Oceans and Fisheries Partnership. Produced by the National Network on Women in Fisheries in the Philippines, Inc., General Santos City, Philippines.
- USAID Oceans, SEAFDEC & CTI-CFF/WLF.** 2020. *Regional document on gender integration in the fisheries workplace*.
- WCPFC (Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission).** 2022. About WCPFC. <https://www.wcpfc.int/about-wcpfc>
- World Bank,** n.d. *The World Bank in the Philippines*. [https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/philippines/overview#:~:text=With%20continued%20recovery%20and%20reform,%2412%2C695\)%20in%20the%20short%20term](https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/philippines/overview#:~:text=With%20continued%20recovery%20and%20reform,%2412%2C695)%20in%20the%20short%20term)
- World Bank.** 2021. *Philippines Country Gender Action Plan (FY20–24)*. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/infographic/2021/03/27/philippines-country-gender-action-plan-fy20-24>
- World Bank.** 2022. *Overcoming poverty and inequality in the Philippines: past, present, and prospects for the future*. Washington, D.C., World Bank.
- World Economic Forum.** 2022. *Global Gender Gap Report*. Geneva, Switzerland. <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2022>
- Yap, E.E.S., Peralta, E.M., Napata, R.B., Espectato, L.N. & Serofia, G.N.** 2017. A model for gender-based post-harvest fisheries technology transfer initiatives in the Philippines. *Asian Fisheries Science Special Issue*, 30: 145–162. [doi.org/10.33997/j.afs.2017.30.S1.007](https://doi.org/10.33997/j.afs.2017.30.S1.007)



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 Philippines.

Approximately 1 500 000 women in the Philippines 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 Filipino fisheries sector, including supporting the registration of women in fisheries databases to increase their access to extension services, strengthening the capacity of gender and development focal points at local and national level and supporting the strengthening and networking of women's organizations to increase their access to services and resources.

