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SUB-COMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE

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WOMEN IN AQUACULTURE – CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This working document highlights the crucial and urgent need to address gender inequalities and support women's empowerment in aquaculture to strengthen the sector's contribution to all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and SDG5 in particular, making sure to leave no one behind. It outlines the challenges that prevent women's equal engagement and their empowerment in the sector, starting from the lack of gender statistics, including sex-disaggregated data, to produce the evidence base for gender-responsive policy-making and investment in aquaculture. The diversity of the aquaculture sector, coupled with the complexity of gender and other intersecting issues, are not well understood and need to be further analysed. The document suggests recommended activities, interventions, strategies and partnerships with international, regional and non-governmental organizations to address gender inequality in aquaculture, taking into account the contribution that the aquaculture sector can provide to achieving SDG5 and vice versa; and the potential of newly developed tools and promising approaches, such as Gender Transformative Approaches (GTAs) to help achieve equal relations and opportunities for women and men in aquaculture development and value chains, by tackling the structural barriers to gender equality and women's empowerment.

Suggested action by the Sub-Committee

The Sub-Committee is invited to:

- Recognize that gender inequalities in aquaculture persist and that it is in the interest of sustainable aquaculture development that these inequalities are urgently redressed through the adoption of Gender Transformative Approaches;
- Take note of the work of FAO towards gender equality and women's empowerment and encourage FAO to continue mainstreaming gender in its work programme; and
- Discuss and recommend further actions and strategies that may be pursued by FAO and its Members to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment in aquaculture.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1. The protection and promotion of women's rights and gender equality are enshrined in the intergovernmental mandate of the United Nations, which recognizes that women's rights are human rights.^{1 2}

2. Since 1946, with the creation of the Commission on the Status of Women, women's rights and empowerment, gender equality and mainstreaming have been continuously discussed and considered in the negotiation of international instruments, World Conferences and high-level fora.³

3. Gender refers to the roles, relationships, behaviors, activities and attributes that a given society at a specific time considers appropriate for men and women, which are socially constructed and learned through socialization processes. Gender mainstreaming is a strategy and a process of assessing women's and men's concerns and experiences in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, legislation and programmes so inequalities are not perpetuated and all benefit. It is key to achieving gender equality, a state in which women and men enjoy equal rights, opportunities and entitlements in civil and political life.⁴

4. Commitment to gender equality, and the elimination of gender discrimination have been strengthened by a series of Conventions and Declarations and frameworks from the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women⁵ (CEDAW); the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA); and the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. These agreements highlight that the rights of women and girls are "*inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights*"⁶ and draw attention to the unique situation and needs of rural women and girls and call for the respect and implementation of rural women's rights regarding their access to resources and their role in decision-making. It binds State parties to take all appropriate measures to eliminate any form of discrimination that prevents women to benefiting equally from rural development.⁷ More recently, gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls feature

¹ United Nations, *Charter of the United Nations*, 24 October 1945, 1 UNTS XVI. www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/chapter-1

² UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 10 December 1948, 217 A (III). www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights

³ www.un.org/en/global-issues/gender-equality

⁴ UN Women Training Centre. Gender Equality Glossary.

<https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/glossary/view.php?id=36&mode=letter&hook=G&sortkey=&sortorder>

⁵ UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, 18 December 1979, A/RES/34/180.

⁶ United Nations, *Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women*, 27 October 1995.

www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/PFA_E_Final_WEB.pdf

⁷ FAO. 2020. *FAO Policy on Gender Equality 2020–2030*. Rome. www.fao.org/3/cb1583en/cb1583en.pdf

prominently in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), both as an explicit stand-alone goal (SDG5) and a cross-cutting theme.

5. Guided by its commitments to the CEDAW, the BPfA and Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, FAO recognizes that gender equality is essential to achieve its mandate. Persisting inequalities between women and men are considered a major obstacle to agriculture and rural development, to inclusive food systems and resilient societies.

6. The FAO Policy on Gender Equality 2020–2030 guides the Organization’s technical and normative work towards the goal of achieving equality between women and men in sustainable agriculture and rural development for the elimination of hunger and poverty.

7. Significant guidance is available from FAO to mainstream gender concerns in agriculture, rural development and value chains,^{8 9} and gender equality features prominently in several of the voluntary guidelines^{10 11} endorsed by the Committee on World Food Security.^{12 13}

8. The Bangkok Declaration and Strategy on Aquaculture Development Beyond 2000¹⁴, adopted by participants of the FAO/NACA Conference on Aquaculture in the Third Millennium in 2000, calls for gender-sensitive policies (see *inter alia* Articles 3.4 and 3.6). The 2010 Phuket Consensus¹⁵ represents an increasing recognition of the interconnection of gender equality, and social and economic challenges. It suggests implementing specific programmes to facilitate women's socioeconomic and political empowerment by encouraging their active participation in aquaculture development.

9. The Shanghai Declaration, the participants’ document resulting from the FAO/NACA Global Conference on Aquaculture Millennium +20 in September 2021, goes further in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in aquaculture development. It highlights factors that prevent women to benefit equally from aquaculture development: the lack of sex-disaggregated data for use in planning and monitoring; and the existence of aquaculture policies that do not distinguish different women’s and men’s needs in development.¹⁶

⁸ FAO. 2016. *Developing gender-sensitive value chains – A guiding framework*. Rome. www.fao.org/3/i6462e/i6462e.pdf

⁹ FAO. 2018. *Gender and food loss in sustainable food value chains – A guiding note*. Rome. www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/I8620EN/

¹⁰ FAO. 2012. *Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security*. Rome www.fao.org/3/i2801e/i2801e.pdf

¹¹ FAO. 2005. *Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security*. Rome. www.fao.org/3/y7937e/Y7937E.pdf

¹² CFS. 2014. *Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems*. www.fao.org/3/au866e/au866e.pdf

¹³ FAO. 2015. *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication*. Rome www.fao.org/3/i4356en/14356EN.pdf

¹⁴ NACA/FAO. 2000. *Aquaculture Development Beyond 2000: the Bangkok Declaration and Strategy*. Conference on Aquaculture in the Third Millennium, 20-25 February 2000, Bangkok, Thailand. NACA, Bangkok and FAO, Rome. www.fao.org/3/ad351e/ad351e.pdf

¹⁵ FAO. 2010. *Phuket Consensus: a re-affirmation of commitment to the Bangkok Declaration*. Global Conference on Aquaculture, 2010, Phuket, Thailand. FAO, Rome. www.fao.org/fishery/docs/DOCUMENT/aquaculture/aq2010/Phuket_Consensus_13-12-2010.pdf

¹⁶ FAO/NACA Global Conference on Aquaculture Millennium +20, 2021. *Shanghai Declaration: Aquaculture for food and sustainable development*. Global Conference on Aquaculture Millennium +20, 22-25 September 2021, Shanghai, China. <https://aquaculture2020.org/uploads/shanghai-declaration-EN.pdf>

10. The need for gender equality and women's empowerment has also been emphasized by the Committee of Fisheries (COFI)^{17 18} and in the 2021 COFI Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture.¹⁹

11. The COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture (COFI:AQ) at its Tenth Session requested “*support for the inclusion of women and youth in policies, and better understanding of the complex relationships between nutrition, poverty, gender, youth, competition for scarce resources (...) and climate change*”.²⁰ The role of women in the use and conservation of aquatic genetic resources was emphasized²¹ as well as the need to consider gender “*when promoting the contribution of aquaculture to food security and nutrition outcomes*”.²²

12. Although attention to gender in aquaculture is increasing in the discussions of the COFI:AQ and COFI, gender equality has yet to gain increased visibility as a regular topic of discussion or agenda items in these fora, which is at odds with the pressing requirement to comply with the objectives and the minimum standards of the FAO Policy on Gender Equality.²³

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT IN AQUACULTURE

13. Aquaculture is the fastest growing sector of food production in the world and plays a critical role in food security and nutrition, economic empowerment and creation of employment opportunities for millions of people. However, women are not necessarily able to engage in aquaculture value chains in the same way as men, and benefits from their participation are not always representative of their contribution. The aquaculture sector is still far from gender parity, let alone gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Challenge 1: Lack of sex-disaggregated data in aquaculture and women's invisibility in aquaculture are two sides of the same coin

14. Gender statistics include sex-disaggregated data, where data is collected and analyzed separately for women and men. In addition to gender, it is important to consider other intersecting factors such as age, race, ethnicity, health, disability status, religion and education, which often contribute to the discrimination against women and girls. These data are fundamental for setting a foundational understanding of who is engaged in and benefits from aquaculture value chains, and for producing the evidence for gender-responsive policies and investments related to aquaculture. Since 1952, the primary source of the sex-disaggregated employment data is from FAO Members that annually send their employment statistics, among other aquaculture statistics.

¹⁷ FAO. 2023. Report of the Thirty-fifth Session of the Committee on Fisheries, Rome, 5–9 September 2022. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Report, No. 1391. Rome. www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cc3652en

¹⁸ FAO 2019. Report of the Thirty-third Session of the Committee on Fisheries, Rome, Italy, 9–13 July 2018. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture. Report No. 1249. Rome. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO. www.fao.org/3/ca5184en/ca5184en.pdf

¹⁹ FAO. 2021. 2021 COFI Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture. Rome. www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb3767en

²⁰ FAO Committee on Fisheries. 2019. Report of the Tenth Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture. Trondheim, Norway, 23–27 August 2019. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Report No. 1287. Rome, Italy www.fao.org/3/ca7417t/ca7417t.pdf

²¹ FAO. 2019. COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture. Tenth Session. The state of the world's aquatic genetic resources for food and agriculture and possible follow-up. COFI:AQ/X/2019/2.1. www.fao.org/3/na484en/na484en.pdf

²² FAO, 2019. COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture. Tenth Session. Aquaculture’s contribution to ending hunger, securing food supplies and promoting good health and dietary practices. COFI:AQ/X/2019/6/REV1 www.fao.org/3/na220en/na220en.pdf

²³ FAO. 2020. *FAO Policy on Gender Equality 2020–2030*. Rome. www.fao.org/3/cb1583en/cb1583en.pdf

15. In 2020, out of 182 reporting FAO Members, 131 reported at least partially sex-disaggregated data for aquaculture.²⁴ Of the 42 countries reporting processing sector employment, 23 reported sex-disaggregated data. The data from the limited number of countries reporting suffers from low resolution. In addition, for the time-use categories of “part-time” and “status-unspecified”, most of the sex-unspecified figures were reported; though women are most often engaged in these categories. Furthermore, processing data are often an aggregate of capture fisheries and aquaculture, further obscuring the picture of the role of women in aquaculture.

16. According to FAO’s data for 2020, women make up about 28 percent of the global aquaculture workforce. The sector is gendered: there are large differences in the numbers of women and men involved, depending on the type of production systems and their scale. For production-related work, women’s roles are significant, but often informal, unpaid and unreported.²⁵ Women also perform fundamental supporting roles, as accountants, in marketing, or in sourcing inputs, but they will rarely progress to leadership positions and become managers. Their engagement drops as production intensifies and scale and responsibilities increase.²⁶ Women dominate the post-harvest sector, and are the main workforce in fish processing factories, but are often assigned the most unstable roles and low-skilled, poorly paid or unpaid positions.²⁷

17. There is no clear picture of how benefits are distributed among different actors along the aquaculture chain, nor on other aspects of the quality of women’s participation compared to men’s.²⁸ Evidence suggests major gendered imbalances in decision-making power, access to and control over resources, and formal and informal barriers limiting women’s equal engagement in the value chain. However, issues vary across contexts, and aquaculture development outcomes are shaped by intersectional factors such as age, class, race and religion that dynamically interact.²⁹ Data collection should be designed to best capture women’s engagement, including informal engagement, and assess the gender impacts of any intervention. The goal of sex-disaggregated data is insufficient on its own to reflect the roles and responsibilities, (lack of) access to resources, services, infrastructures, trainings, leadership and decision-making power of women working in the various segments of the industry.³⁰ For producing relevant gender statistics it is essential to adopt a gender lens alongside data collection, in order to study power interactions and relationships between women and men in aquaculture, taking into account the sociocultural context and the different perceptions of people.

18. International and regional organizations including FAO, other UN agencies and partners have a key role in facilitating and harmonizing the collection of sex-disaggregated data. However, the topic of gender is not included in the aquaculture survey questionnaire of the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF). The integration of gender issues in the CCRF questionnaire would be an opportunity to increase the provision of aquaculture information disaggregated by sex. This would further provide the data for FAO and Members to monitor the improvements towards gender

²⁴ FAO. 2020. *FAO Yearbook. Fishery and Aquaculture Statistics 2018*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb1213t>

²⁵ Monfort, M. C. (2015). The role of women in the seafood industry. *GLOBEFISH Research Programme*, 119, 67. www.fao.org/3/bc014e/bc014e.pdf

²⁶ Brugere, C. and Williams, M. 2017. Women in Aquaculture Profile. <https://genderaquafish.org/portfolio/women-in-aquaculture/>

²⁷ FAO. 2020. *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2020. Sustainability in action*. Rome. www.fao.org/3/ca9229en/ca9229en.pdf

²⁸ Kruijssen, F., McDougall, C.L., & van Asseldonk, I.J.M. (2018). Gender and aquaculture value chains: A review of key issues and implications for research. *Aquaculture*, 493, 328–337. www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0044848617325577?via%3Dihub <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aquaculture.2017.12.0388>

²⁹ Morgan, M., Terry, G., Rajaratnam, S., & Pant, J. (2017). Socio-cultural dynamics shaping the potential of aquaculture to deliver development outcomes. *Reviews in Aquaculture*, 9(4), 317-325. <https://doi.org/10.1111/raq.12137>

³⁰ FAO. 2020. *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2020. Sustainability in action*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/ca9229en>

equality and women's empowerment on a regular basis, through frequent updates at COFI and its Sub-Committees.

Challenge 2: Measuring the aquaculture sector's contribution to SDGs related to human issues is complex because of the diversity of the aquaculture sector, coupled with the complexity of gender and intersectional issues

19. The diversity and heterogeneity of the aquaculture sector and value chains make addressing gender issues complicated, as gender issues are context-specific. It involves considering the characteristics of the specific production system; relevant governance systems; and cultural and sociopolitical contexts, along with the power relations between women and men all together.

20. In order to fully account for these issues, gender analysis must be conducted. These analyses require engagement and collaboration with ministries, authorities and all stakeholders, for greater understanding of the gender specificities of each aquaculture system and value chain, while connecting with associated topics.

21. Besides having different roles, needs, constraints and opportunities than men, it is important to emphasize the complexity of identities and the differences among women as well. Factors such as race, ethnicity, class, cast, religion, sexual orientation and gender make up an individual's identity and intertwine in unique ways that create advantages or disadvantages, social discrimination, constraints or opportunities. These intersecting elements are referred to as "intersectionality".³¹ An intersectional approach recognizes that women are not a single homogenous group, and that gender should not be taken in isolation from other variables when understanding, documenting and addressing women's experiences and the different forms of discrimination affecting particularly women and girls.³²

22. In addition, forces external to the aquaculture sector (for example consequences of pandemics, climate change, globalization and geo-political change) can unexpectedly open or close opportunities for women to continue their production, trade or transformation activities, and add another layer of complexity to gender analysis and the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment in aquaculture.

23. Gender studies have been poorly integrated in aquaculture development approaches, resulting in the lack of intersection between SDG5 with the aquaculture sector's activities. Out of all the SDGs, SDG5 is not the one most often or most naturally associated with aquaculture, even though addressing gender issues in aquaculture development is crucial to speed up the progress towards the SDGs and support the contribution of the sector to human well-being more generally.³³

24. There are SDGs beyond SDG5 which are also relevant to gender equality and women's empowerment in aquaculture. Related issues of women's rights to decent employment in fish value chains, including access to health services, work safety and labour rights, are encapsulated in SDG8.³⁴ In the same vein, the sector contributes to many goals and targets although it is not specifically referenced. The lack of explicit reference to these issues means that accurately capturing this

³¹ U.S. Agency for International Development. 2018. Gender research in fisheries and aquaculture: A training handbook. The USAID Oceans and Fisheries Partnership. www.seafdec-oceanspartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/USAID-Oceans_Gender-In-Fisheries_Training-Guide_March-2019.pdf

³² Meryl J Williams, Nikita Gopal, Rejula K, Carmen Pedroza-Gutiérrez, Arlene Nietes Satapornvanit, Paul Ramirez, Ananthan P.S., Mary Barby Badayos-Jover, Alita Roxas, Sijitha Mary C.X., Janine Pierce and Afrina Choudhury, 2019, *Long Report GAF7: Expanding the Horizons The 7th Global Conference on Gender in Aquaculture & Fisheries*. www.genderaquafish.org/gaf7-long-report-expanding-the-horizons/

³³ Delaney, C. 2020. *The Sustainable Development Goals as related to aquaculture*. Unpublished Masters dissertation, Institute of Aquaculture, University of Stirling.

³⁴ FAO. 2017. COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture. Ninth Session. The 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals: the Challenge for Aquaculture Development and Management. COFI:AQ/IX/2017/SBD.2. www.fao.org/cofi/38663-0a3e5c407f3fb23a0e1a3a4fa62d7420c.pdf

contribution through monitoring and reporting processes will require time, expertise and resources to tease out these nuanced contributions.

25. In this context, the required institutional response needs to be commensurate with the increasing recognition of, and demand for support to address these complexities (for example, the diversity of the sector, gender and intersectional issues). Resources and guidance materials on gender issues are continuously developed but need to be more widely disseminated, implemented and tailored to the aquaculture sector. FAO Members are encouraged to use available resources and promote their application among their partners at all levels, while recognizing the need for further investments over longer timeframes to address social and gender inequalities in the aquaculture sector.

Challenge 3: Systemic inequalities exacerbate differences in access to resources, productive inputs, rural advisory and finance services, labour, technology, market information, opportunities and well-being for women, hindering progress towards gender equality in the sector

26. Discrimination based on sex, gender, age, race, ethnicity, health, disability status, religion and education is insidious and often goes unreported or unquestioned. Gender inequalities encountered in society are mirrored in the aquaculture sector, and current knowledge on the interplay of social issues on aquaculture development outcomes, and vice versa, is still often incomplete. Prevailing gender norms and discriminatory policies often inhibit women's rights and limit their opportunities to participate and equally benefit from aquaculture.³⁵ Land rights and formal and informal ownership systems and patterns are often biased or otherwise unequal. Exploitation and violence against women and girls are encountered in the aquaculture sector, infringing both human rights and international labour standards.

27. Market forces and certifications can be powerful tools to influence the practices of private producers.³⁶ ³⁷ However, most certification schemes have not fully incorporated gender equality considerations in their farming standards, comparatively to the advances that have been made in relation to compliance with environmental sustainability and food safety criteria. The voluntary nature of certification also makes it difficult to track women's participation, benefits, fair and decent employment conditions and human rights compliance everywhere and at each stage of the aquaculture value chain. Mechanisms must be found for public and private players to work together to find ways to ensure sustainability in all three dimensions (economic, political and social). This is likely to involve increased collaboration between state and non-state actors, including civil society organizations and the private sector (producing companies, suppliers, processors, banks, certification bodies), and between different government ministries to promote a more coherent institutional environment through gender-responsive policies, investments and partnerships enabling the aquaculture to sustainably thrive and realize equitable outcomes.³⁸

Opportunity 1: Efforts towards gender-responsive policies, interventions and partnerships in aquaculture are emerging

28. International and regional organizations have made substantial efforts to empower women and promote gender mainstreaming through policies, interventions and public-private partnerships.

³⁵ Brugere, C., & Williams, M. (n.d.). *Profile: Women in Aquaculture*.

<https://genderaquafish.org/portfolio/women-in-aquaculture/>

³⁶ Kruijssen, F., Newton, J., Kuijpers, R., Bah, A., Rappoldt, A., Nichols, E., Kusumawati, R., Nga, D.N. 2021. Assessment of social impact of GAA's 'Best Aquaculture Practices' certification. KIT Royal Tropical Institute: Amsterdam. www.aquaculturealliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/KIT_BAP-social-impact3.pdf

³⁷ *Ibid*

³⁸ Brugere, C., Troell, M. and Eriksson, H. (2021) *More than fish: policy coherence and benefit sharing as necessary conditions for equitable aquaculture development*. Marine Policy, 23: 104271, <https://bit.ly/34xBrTi>

Examples include facilitating women's access to and control over productive resources;³⁹ emphasizing the benefits of diversified farming systems on women's empowerment^{40 41} and investing in labour-saving and climate-smart technologies to reduce women's work burden.⁴² Special efforts are required to strengthen women's technical and leadership skills, as well as support their organizations and associations, in order to increase their engagement in planning and decision-making processes. Yet, a few initiatives have gone further by implementing innovative and transformative approaches that equally engage women and men to explicitly address constraining gender norms and empower women and girls through aquaculture innovations.^{43 44 45 46} Gender strategies are also being developed to support regional organizations' efforts in integrating gender considerations in fisheries and aquaculture programmes and projects.⁴⁷

29. The GenderAquaFish network of researchers, women's and gender groups, societies, organizations are a strong advocate for the advancement of women within aquaculture and fisheries.⁴⁸ Partnering with these or similar organizations provides an opportunity to build a momentum and increase the focus on gender specific issues in aquaculture.

³⁹ A. Choudhury, C. McDougall, S. Rajaratnam, C.M.Y. Park. *Women's empowerment in aquaculture: Two case studies from Bangladesh*. Rome, Italy: FAO, 2018.

https://digitalarchive.worldfishcenter.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12348/270/4160_4160.pdf

⁴⁰ FAO-SHOU. 2020. Report of the FAO – SHOU International Promotion Programme Workshop on Social Impact of Rice-Fish Farming. Shanghai, China, 4-8 December 2018. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Report No. 1317, Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/ca9907en>

⁴¹ Flavia Grassi, Thelma R. Paris, Truong Thi Ngoc Chi (2017). *Rice-rice and rice-shrimp production. A gender perspective on labour, time use and access to technologies and services in southern Viet Nam*. FAO. Rome, Italy. www.fao.org/3/i7277e/i7277e.pdf

⁴² A. Choudhury, C. McDougall, S. Rajaratnam, C.M.Y. Park. *Women's empowerment in aquaculture: Two case studies from Bangladesh*. Rome, Italy: FAO, 2018

https://digitalarchive.worldfishcenter.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12348/270/4160_4160.pdf

⁴³ Farnworth, C.R., Kantor, P., Choudhury, A., McGuire, S., Sultana, N., Gender Relations and Improved Technologies in Small Household Ponds in Bangladesh: Rolling out Novel Learning Approaches. *Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries: The Long Journey to Equality Asian Fisheries Science Special Issue 29S* (2016): 161-178. Asian Fisheries Society.

www.researchgate.net/publication/319313411_Gender_Relations_and_Improved_Technologies_in_Small_Household_Ponds_in_Bangladesh_Rolling_out_Novel_Learning_Approaches

⁴⁴ Wisemen, B., 2021. Pond polyculture: Disrupting gender and cultural norms in Luwingu, Northern Province, Zambia. WorldFish Blog. www.worldfishcenter.org/blog/pond-polyculture-disrupting-gender-and-cultural-norms-luwingu-northern-province-zambia

⁴⁵ Brugere, C., Msuya, F.E., Jiddawi, N., Nyonje, B. and Maly, R. (2020) *Can innovation empower? Reflections on the introduction of tubular nets to women seaweed farmers in Zanzibar*. *Gender, Technology and Development*. www.researchgate.net/publication/338931576_Can_innovation_empower_Reflections_on_introducing_tubular_nets_to_women_seaweed_farmers_in_Zanzibar

⁴⁶ CGIAR Research Program on Aquatic Agricultural Systems (2012). Gender strategy brief: A gender transformative approach to research in development in aquatic agricultural systems. CGIAR Research Program on Aquatic Agricultural Systems. Penang, Malaysia. Brief AAS-2012-03a www.worldfishcenter.org/publication/gender-strategy-brief-gender-transformative-approach-research-development-aquatic

⁴⁷ SEAFDEC. (2019). SEAFDEC Gender Strategy- Mainstreaming gender in SEAFDEC and its programs. Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center. Bangkok, Thailand.

<http://repository.seafdec.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12066/4861/Gender%20Strategy.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

⁴⁸ Meryl J Williams, Nikita Gopal, Rejula K, Carmen Pedroza-Gutiérrez, Arlene Nietes Satapornvanit, Paul Ramirez, Ananthan P.S., Mary Barby Badayos-Jover, Alita Roxas, Sijitha Mary C.X., Janine Pierce and Afrina Choudhury, 2019, Long Report GAF7: Expanding the Horizons The 7th Global Conference on Gender in Aquaculture & Fisheries, pp. 57. www.genderaquafish.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/GAF7_Long-Report.pdf

Opportunity 2: The global thrust towards the achievement of the SDGs, in parallel to the growing recognition by FAO Members of aquaculture’s potential for human well-being, offers an opportunity for meaningfully addressing gender issues in the sector, as well as measuring aquaculture’s own contribution to SDG5

30. SDG5 targets and indicators can be linked to the aquaculture sector, in view of potential upscaling of gender integration in aquaculture. FAO is the custodian for the indicators 5.a.1 and 5.a.2.⁴⁹ Examples of where aquaculture could be reported against SDG5 include 5.a.1., and 5.a.2, while actions could be taken in the sector regarding Targets 5.5, 5.b and 5.c.

31. It is however important to emphasize that some issues covered in SDG5 targets and indicators are still invisible in aquaculture’s literature and in aquaculture development interventions, projects and programmes. Yet, they impact women’s and girls’ availability to work and engage in the sector and to realize their full potential. For example:

- Target 5.1 echoes CEDAW, which needs to be more connected to aquaculture development. Ending discrimination requires a deep analysis of the context in which the discrimination against women and girls is generated and how progress towards closing the gender gaps can be measured.⁵⁰ More gender awareness raising should therefore be promoted, *inter alia* through pertinent gender research and availability and sharing of information. At the policy level, the implementation and application of CEDAW’s articles and recommendations should be supported and budgets allocated accordingly to support the gender-related work.
- Target 5.2, addressed in paragraph 27, is not perceived as part of the traditional debate in the aquaculture sector while there is a need to take action, beginning by gender awareness raising at the global, regional, national and local levels. It is all the more urgent regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, which has proven to be a vector and accelerator of inequality, and has exacerbated violence against women and girls worldwide.⁵¹
- Target 5.6 is also key to document, in particular in relation to the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in coastal communities, due to lack of reproductive education and access to sexual and reproductive health.
- Target 5.4 is key to reflect the triple work burden (considering the workplace, the household and the community) of rural women and girls and to design appropriate gender-responsive actions and interventions. Indeed, their engagement in the sector is also shaped by power relationships within the household and communities, and the deeply anchored perceptions that domestic and care work should be carried out only by women.

Opportunity 3: Gender Transformative Approaches (GTAs) hold potential for changing business as usual in aquaculture and achieving equal relations opportunities in aquaculture development and value chains

32. The use of newly-developed GTAs offers an opportunity to comprehensively address situations of substantive inequality that occur when disadvantages, stereotyping, discrimination and exclusion issues are not adequately addressed and the right to equality is not met. GTAs go farther than gender-sensitive approaches, which integrate gender as a mean to achieve other objectives without seeking to change structural barriers, or gender-responsive approaches, which recognize and address the specific needs and priorities of men and women, based on the social construction of gender roles.⁵²

⁴⁹ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5>

⁵⁰ Williams, Meryl (2017). *Gender equal fisheries*.

<https://igssf.icsf.net/en/yemaya/detail/EN/2270.html?detpag=mapart>

⁵¹ FAO Aquaculture Newsletter. October 2020 No. 62. *Women as agents of change in the response to COVID-19*. pp. 50-52. www.fao.org/3/cb1550en/CB1550EN.pdf

⁵² FAO. 2021. *Achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment in agriculture and food systems – A handbook for gender focal points*. Rome www.fao.org/3/cb2401en/cb2401en.pdf

33. The core characteristics of GTAs include:
- address the underlying rigid social norms, attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate gender inequalities, which are rooted in discriminatory social, economic and formal and informal institutions, policies and laws;
 - use participatory and inclusive approaches to facilitate dialogue, trust, ownership, visioning and behaviour change at various levels (individual/household, group/community, institution/organization and policies/laws), based on social and experiential learning;
 - explicitly engage with men and boys to address the concepts of masculinity and gender, and engage them as allies for change and advocates for gender equality; and
 - engage with influential norms holders, such as traditional and religious leaders, lead farmers, agricultural and health extension workers, school principals, elected representatives, local authorities and members of legal structure.⁵³
34. Opportunities for gender transformation exist at all organizational levels⁵⁴ and are adaptable to any context, regardless of level and focus. Technology- or policy-driven aquaculture interventions and assistance can be framed in a gender-transformative and inclusive perspectives. Incorporated in interventions in support of aquaculture development, GTAs can trigger changes in individuals and in their practices, and hence change the “business as usual” that progressing to greater gender equality in the sector requires. When a GTA is embedded in the design of a technical aquaculture intervention, it leads to positive outcomes in terms of adoption of technology, improved farming practices and equal benefits for women, such as greater control over production and self-efficacy and better acceptance by other members of the community of improved farming practices.⁵⁵
35. At the project level, this would mean mainstreaming the principles of GTAs in all types of aquaculture technical cooperation projects. Critically, GTAs require a gender-responsive ‘mind-set’ on behalf of project implementers, starting at the request and design stage and involving multidisciplinary teams. It also involves working equally with men and women beneficiaries. At the policy level, this entails applying a gender lens to all aspects of the work, regardless of whether it concerns a review or formulation of new policies and legislation, identifying and addressing the different needs and priorities of women and men involved in aquaculture. It also entails, in parallel, working on the practices and perceptions of policy makers/decision makers, government employees to raise their gender awareness to make their policies gender-responsive and increase their capacity to incorporate gender issues and promote GTAs in their daily work and the promotion of aquaculture at ground level.
36. Partnerships will be critical in this endeavour, and it is encouraging that the Rome-based Agencies have launched a joint programme entitled “*Taking gender transformative approaches to scale for impact on SDG2 to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote*

⁵³ FAO, IFAD and WFP. 2020. *Gender transformative approaches for food security, improved nutrition and sustainable agriculture – A compendium of fifteen good practices*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb1331en> (page 6).

⁵⁴ Pederson, A., Greaves, L., and Poole, N. “*Gender-transformative health promotion for women – a framework for action*”, Health Promotion International, vol. 30, no. 1, March 2015

UNPF (United Nations Population Fund) 2020. Technical note on gender transformative approaches in the global programme to end child marriage phase II: A summary for practitioner

⁵⁵ Farnworth C.R., Sultana N., Kantor, P. and Choudhury, A. 2015. *Gender integration in aquaculture research and technology adoption processes: Lessons learned in Bangladesh*. Penang, Malaysia: WorldFish. Working Paper: 2015-17. https://digitalarchive.worldfishcenter.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12348/233/3883_2015-17.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Morgan, M., Choudhury, A., Braun, M., Beare, D., Benedict, J. and Kantor, P. 2015. Understanding the gender dimensions of adopting climate-smart smallholder aquaculture innovations. Penang, Malaysia: CGIAR Research Program on Aquatic Agricultural Systems. Working Paper: AAS-2015-08. http://pubs.iclarm.net/resource_centre/AAS-2015-08.pdf

Choudhury, A., n.d. *Merging the social with the technical. Social Consciousness-raising Exercises: Tools for a Gender Transformative Approach*. GAF 7. www.genderaquafish.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Special-Workshop-VII-02-Afrina.pdf

sustainable agriculture”.⁵⁶ Lessons drawn from this programme constitute a sound basis upon which to draw for future implementation and scaling up in aquaculture.

37. Adopting GTAs in aquaculture development is a major opportunity to achieve a sustainable, equitable and inclusive sector. It allows both to significantly address deep structural barriers to achieve the goal of gender equality and women’s empowerment, and to strengthen the commitment FAO and its Members have made in the 2021 COFI Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture.

38. These efforts will be all the more impactful if FAO Members, with the support of FAO, work towards:

- developing aquaculture policies and increasing the use of toolkits, guidance and certification schemes that are gender-responsive and transformative as a goal;
- formulating gender equality targets in every aquaculture development strategy to ensure that every aspect of the legal and institutional environment reflects the changes required to remove inequality and discrimination against women and girls;
- dedicating more funds to gender-related research and disruptive aquaculture initiatives that seek to understand better what supports or hampers women’s contribution and progress in the sector and challenge the status quo;
- accelerating new or ongoing efforts to collect and use sex-disaggregated aquaculture data and produce evidence for gender-responsive planning.⁵⁷

UPDATE ON FAO’S WORK ON GENDER

39. In line with the latest FAO’s Strategic Framework, and the upscaling of FAO’s gender work, the recent restructuring of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Division (NFI) has embraced the need to better address the requirements of the FAO Policy on Gender by establishing the NFI Gender Focal Point (NFISG), which has been welcomed at the Eleventh Session of COFI:AQ.⁵⁸

40. FAO recently launched “*The Status of Women in Agrifood Systems Report*”, which uses extensive new data and analyses to provide a comprehensive picture of women’s participation, benefits and challenges they face working in agrifood systems globally, including in the aquaculture and fisheries sector. It shows how increasing women’s empowerment and gender equality in agrifood systems enhances women’s well-being and the well-being of their households, creating opportunities for economic growth, greater incomes, productivity and resilience.⁵⁹

41. NFI has expanded its work on incorporating gender into its technical and normative work, including in events, publications and programmes dedicated to aquaculture and fisheries, as well as aquaculture projects targeting women’s empowerment.⁶⁰

42. NFI organized a series of webinars to inform and raise awareness on gender issues and women’s empowerment in the aquaculture and fisheries sectors, in collaboration with diverse partners from the private sector, non-profit research institutions, academia and FAO Members. It includes the technical webinar on “*Learning from experiences in implementing GTAs in the fisheries and aquaculture*

⁵⁶ FAO, IFAD and WFP. 2020. Gender transformative approaches for food security, improved nutrition and sustainable agriculture – A compendium of fifteen good practices. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb1331en>

⁵⁷ Brugere, C., Bankal, T., Williams, M. *et al.* 2021. *Humanizing aquaculture: Putting social and human dimensions at the centre of aquaculture development*. Paper presented at the Global Conference on Aquaculture Millennium +20.

⁵⁸ Report of the Eleventh Session of the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture. Rome, Italy, 24–27 May 2022 www.fao.org/3/cc0928t/cc0928t.pdf

⁵⁹ FAO. 2023. *The status of women in agrifood systems*. Rome. www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cc5343en

⁶⁰ FAO, 2022. *FAO Aquaculture News*. May 2022, No.65. Rome. www.fao.org/3/cc0158en/cc0158en.pdf

sectors”,⁶¹ the IYAFa event “Women and changing tide: How to break the bias”,⁶² and the special events on the occasion of the International Women’s Days.⁶³

43. The Sub-Committee may wish to provide guidance on how FAO should strengthen its work on gender mainstreaming in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, and to consider the human and financial resources required to do so effectively. FAO welcomes advice from Members for improvement of gender mainstreaming in aquaculture projects and programmes.

⁶¹ <https://gender.cgiar.org/news/learning-experiences-implementing-gender-transformative-approaches-fisheries-and-aquaculture>

⁶² www.fao.org/artisanal-fisheries-aquaculture-2022/events/events-list/en/

⁶³ FAO, 2021. *FAO Aquaculture News*. May 2021, No. 63. Rome. www.fao.org/3/cb4850en/cb4850en.pdf