

Gender Mainstreaming in Coastal and Marine Ecosystem Management: Webinar Report

Background

In 2018 UNEP partnered with the Gender and Water Alliance (GWA) to compile the report [Mainstreaming Gender in Coastal and Marine Ecosystems Management](#) with case studies documenting practical aspects of mainstreaming gender in policies, projects and activities related to integrated coastal and marine ecosystem management. Following its publication, it was recommended to compile a larger compendium of case studies from a wider set of geographies and regions and to identify 'principles' that can guide the complex process of gender mainstreaming, and illustrate how these are being implemented in different geographic, socio-economic and ecosystem contexts. This new UNEP-GWA publication, "Gender Mainstreaming in Coastal and Marine Ecosystem Management: Principles, case studies and lessons learned" features the work of diverse stakeholders through 10 case studies from different countries and regions. This webinar provided an opportunity to share the principles developed, as well as examples of case studies that illustrate the principles from different regions of the world, to a wide audience of professionals. More information about this webinar, including the objectives, agenda and presentations made, can be found [here](#).

Opening note by Leticia Carvalho, Head Marine and Freshwater Branch, UNEP Nairobi

Historically the contributions of women in fisheries and marine services have been routinely ignored or underestimated in research, management and policy. This is however changing as there is now increasing recognition that sustainable and integrated marine and coastal ecosystem management requires gender sensitive and gender responsive planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation at project, policy and grassroots level. A key challenge faced by policy makers in mainstreaming gender in the integrated management of marine and coastal ecosystems is the lack of practical examples to guide the implementation of gender-sensitive and gender-responsive actions from an empowerment approach. UNEP has collaborated with the Gender & Water Alliance to produce a report in an effort to bridge this gap that highlights best practices from case studies from around the world based on principles for the mainstreaming of gender issues in coastal and ecosystem management.

Presentations on the Report: Brief on Gender Principles, cases and main findings, by Anamika Amani and Anne-Marie Hanson, Gender and Water Alliance

Participants were given a preview to the report which commenced development in March 2021, and is currently in its final stages of editing and layout design before being launched in early 2022. Anamika explained that the report has been developed with collaboration from a diverse group of organisations and individuals working in marine and coastal ecosystem management. It is intended as a “living document” which should grow and cover more themes, principles and resources in the future. She introduced the main themes, principles, and key recommendations covered within the report and welcomed participants’ feedback on them.

Presentations of some Case Studies included in the report

1. Fiji: Revealing the contributions of Indigenous fisher women to food security and livelihoods by Ana Ciriawa, the Wildlife Conversation Society (WCS, Fiji)

This case study illustrates how WCS is practically implementing Gender Principle 1: Data that reveals the invisible work of unrecognised stakeholders. The main objectives of the research study highlighted in the case study were to understand and quantify the work and contributions of indigenous (iTaukei) women fishers in small-scale fisheries in Fiji to enable informed and effective decision making, by their government and other stakeholders.

2. Kenya: Enhancing effective participation of women in Beach Management Units in coral reef dependent communities by Joan Kawaka, Coastal Oceans Research and Development – Indian Ocean (CORDIO) East Africa

This case study illustrates how CORDIO Kenya is practically implementing Gender Principle 6: Enhancing inclusive decision-making in community-based organisations. In her presentation Joan explained how their organisation enabled long-term effective, equitable and inclusive community-based natural resource management of coral reef areas in the southern coast of Kenya by strengthening meaningful participation of women in local governance institutions.

3. India: Boosting social solidarity and empowerment of women in building the local response to the Covid-19 pandemic in coastal Gujarat by Pallavi Sobti Rajpal, Jaya Rathod and Jigna Dasadiya, Utthan – Gujarat.

This case study from India illustrates how Utthan - a grassroots organisation in India is practically implementing Gender Principle 9: Leveraging diversity, equity and inclusion in building local resilience to crises. The presenters highlighted how they built resilience to the Covid-19 pandemic in coastal villages in Gujarat, by utilizing locally available resources, knowledge and networks in

planning and implementing the emergency relief, thereby boosting social solidarity between village households and the local economy.

4. The Gambia: Recognising and amplifying the value of women shellfish harvester's work through rights-based fisheries co-management by Fatou Janha Mboob of TRY Oyster Women's Association and Karen Kent of University of Rhode Island (URI), USA

This case study from The Gambia and Ghana illustrates how community-based organisations in The Gambia and Ghana are practically implementing Gender Principle 10: Sustaining empowerment and ecosystem benefits in the long-term, in the context of co-management of shell fisheries and their habitat. Karen briefly explained how a multi-stakeholder initiative in Gambia, involving government, academic and research, civil society and the local women shell-fishers utilised rights-based fisheries co-management and peer learning processes to sustain and scale up environmental stewardship, sustainable fisheries livelihoods, and empowerment of socio-economically marginalized women shellfish harvesters.

5. Mexico: Participatory Coastal-Marine Spatial Planning in the Puerto Peñasco – Puerto Lobos Biological and Fisheries Corridor in Sonora by Nelida Barajas Acosta, Intercultural Centre for the Study of Desert and Oceans (CEDO)

This case study illustrates how CEDO is practically implementing Gender Principle 3: Validating and utilizing different capacities and knowledge of women and men. Nelida briefly presented how CEDO used a participatory planning process involving multiple stakeholders, including local fishermen and women to achieve sustainable use of shared seascape and marine resources for the benefit of vulnerable ecosystems and coastal households. Her presentation outlined how CEDO facilitated engagement of artisanal fishermen and -women in the design and implementation of a comprehensive plan for Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning in the Puerto Peñasco-Puerto Lobos Corridor in Sonora, Mexico.

Themes of Discussion

a) Response to COVID-19 and resilience to crises

Policy responses to COVID-19 and other disasters are overwhelmingly gender-blind and can affect women disproportionately negatively. This is also evident in some of the case studies presented during the webinar. Examples from Mexico, The Gambia, India and Bangladesh showed how closing of fish markets due to the pandemic disproportionately affected women, driving down prices and affecting family incomes. Similarly, as tourism disappeared this also impacted household income and house-helpers (majority women) lost their livelihoods, as per the example from The Gambia.

Furthermore, there was an increased burden at home on women to take care of people who caught covid (as evidenced in Mexico and India). Gender-based violence and food insecurity increased in coastal areas due to the impacts of the pandemic and policy responses, as per the example from Bangladesh.

In Gujarat India, women and girls suffered further distress as unpaid household and care work increased and the pandemic threatened food security for many people. The community employed a gender responsive approach in procurement and distribution of locally available resources. For instance, food grains for relief and face masks used in curbing the spread of covid were bought from local women farmers and women tailors respectively. With the help of village leaders and relevant government officials, the most vulnerable in the community were prioritized when directing relief and livelihood support. The community also built alliances with different stakeholder groups for effective interventions such as the government health team, which provided timely support in prevention and treatment of Covid-19 infections. Regular monitoring with local women and youth representatives helped to assess and respond to evolving needs as the pandemic progressed.

However, social resilience also began with women and women's groups. The general feedback from the webinar is that community is very important for resilience during crises: if women get space, decision-making powers and opportunities, then resilience to crises is increased. Women are important and powerful agents of change and men should be encouraged to give their female counterparts (wives, sisters, etc) space and to share household work.

b) Sustainable Financing

Sustainable financing is an important component of the sustainability of any economic activity. Examples from coastal areas around the world include women in the Beach Management Units (BMU) in Kenya carrying out mangrove restoration and selling mangrove seedlings during the pandemic, and as a result earning an income. The women' also earn some profit from bee-keeping in the mangrove forests. From the income which they earn for their group, they give 10% to the patrol guards (who are men) for their patrol and surveillance work. This is necessary in order to protect critical habitats and fish breeding areas. During the Covid pandemic when the economy was depressed, they continued to earn a living by supplying other organisations with mangrove seedlings.

TRY Oyster in The Gambia facilitated the replication of its shellfish harvesting model in Ghana (Densu Oyster Pickers Association, DOPA), supported by a USAID-funded project. TRY Oyster provided technical assistance, exchange visits and peer-to-peer support to DOPA. The women in

these projects benefited from the improved hygiene and handling, marketing and branding, and this resulted in the increase in pricing per kilogram due to the increased size of the oysters and the improved hygiene and handling.

c) Rights of access to resources

Rights of access to resources are a critical component of gender mainstreaming in coastal and marine resources management. A good example is in Mexico with the the Intercultural Center for the Study of Deserts and Oceans (CEDO) promoting Coastal Marine Spatial Planning (CMSP) in 2015. Unlike many CMSP processes which are driven by large development projects and strong economic interests, CEDO's program gave priority to defining the spatial use and rights of traditional local users, such as coastal fishermen and women oyster farmers, through a rigorous participatory consultation and planning process. Some of the stakeholders involved included small scale fishermen and women from six fishing communities. CEDO mobilized 150 local fisher women from these communities to accompany them in their door-to-door survey of fisher households. Because fishermen are distrustful of external agencies and wary of sharing information with them, the local women helped in allaying their fears and explaining the advantages of sharing information and participating in the CMSP process. As a result, they were able to access confidential information about the fishing activities of men in their community. These women also played a valuable role as spokespersons and organizers of community forums to present management proposals of the Intercommunity Fishers Groups (IFG) to the other stakeholders in the management group.

In fisher communities in Fiji, men have always made the decisions, especially in resource management. Women were mostly fished close to the shores for subsistence. Findings from the case study showed that women use low-tech gear and fish the full range of habitats: from fresh-water rivers to the ocean. They are slowly navigating into male dominated spaces (open ocean) as they combine subsistence and commercial fishing. Some of the challenges that fisher women faced revolved around lack of or limited resources: no fishing boats (or money to hire the boats), low-tech fishing gear that limited their catch, distance they have to travel to fish. With regard to selling their catch, women are limited to selling within the community while the men could travel out of the market to make their sales. This is primarily because commercial fishing requires licences which a lot of the women cannot afford. And when they do sell in the same markets as men, they (women) are pushed more when negotiating with buyers and end up selling for less profits. Women's contributions in fisheries are still undervalued because their contribution to commercial fishery is insignificant despite playing key roles in small-scale fisheries sector. Improving equality of access of

women to coastal and marine resources is a critical step to more sustainable and equitable management of Fiji's marine ecosystems.

- d) Building local agency and livelihoods through Participatory co-management and peer-learning processes

Participatory co-management can improve the resilience of coastal ecosystem management systems during times of crisis. The example from The Gambia shows this during a political crisis, when

the Gambian president was ousted in 2016 after 21 years in office and a government crisis ensued, threatening the country's economy. The existence of a co-management plan that strongly involved community decision-making for the TRY Oyster and the Tanbi wetlands with the authorities enabled the women's group to make their own decisions and to continue undertaking their management actions. As a result, there was no breakdown of the management of this ecosystem. Involving the youth in management was also critical as the children of the TRY Oyster women are benefiting from education on oyster biology and water quality testing and are becoming important assets to the sustainable management of the ecosystem, now and in the future.

Several of the case studies in the report show the importance of community-based peer learning processes for validating and strengthening the agency of marginal groups in eco-system based coastal and marine management, and for disseminating successful approaches in this regard. Projects that incorporate peer-learning processes within their management and funding cycle can importantly boost sustainable development of the coastal and marine environment and people who depend on it.

[Closing of Webinar by Gabriel Grimsditch Programme Management Officer, Marine and Coastal Ecosystems Unit](#)

The case studies that were presented provided valuable discussions to reflect on and to include, along with the principles, in the development of projects and policies by project stakeholders around the world to involve different sectors of society in coastal ecosystem management. One of the objectives is to have these principles used in each stage of policy development so that stakeholders can be guided when engaging with coastal communities and projects that affect people's access to resources and management of vulnerable ecosystems. We encourage people to share their feedback on the principles on their content and how they are presented in the report.