

Call to Action? Survey Highlights the Shortcomings of Business-as-Usual in Addressing Gender Equality in the Fishery Sector

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Abstract

In the fishery sector, too little attention is paid to gender equality, and gender-blind policies and programmes render the issue as peripheral or invisible. Since 1990, the Asian Fisheries Society (AFS) has paid sustained attention to gender, although at a modest level. In order to gauge how the small cadre of gender experts perceived progress in mobilising attention and action on gender in fisheries, we conducted an online structured survey. Using Actor Network Theory as the questionnaire framework, we analysed the responses from 41 experts. The respondents perceived that the understanding of the gender inequality issues has progressed well but the strategic messages arising are not communicated strongly nor well targeted. Few workers, and even fewer full time professionals, are dedicated to the field of gender research and action, and research is not well linked to grassroots needs. Therefore, the field suffers from weak efforts to enroll more champions, leaders and actors and reach critical mass for mobilisation for gender equality. For mobilisation to happen, targeted, dedicated resources are urgently needed, including full time people, institutional support and projects. To achieve this will require strong, perhaps even confrontational, campaigns and plans, from within the fishery sector, led by a self-nominated core group of committed women and men concerned with inequality in the fishery sector.

Introduction

In the fishery sector, comprising aquaculture and capture fisheries and their supply chains, gendered divisions of labour and the invisibility of many workers, especially but not only women, can lead to policies and programmes that ignore the needs of many of the workers (Williams et al. 2012). Fishery sector policy and support tends to be androcentric in its themes and reluctant to address social issues, preferring to focus on economic, resource and environmental issues. Specifically, the fishery sector has paid little attention to the gender dimension, adopting the

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narrative that the sector is a masculine domain in which women play little role and in which economic, bio-technical and capitalist drivers and epistemologies prevail. Gender-aware policies and programmes are therefore rare in mainstream fisheries and aquaculture. Yet, in a recent report (World Bank 2012), nearly half the workers in capture fisheries are women, and similar participation is likely in aquaculture. Thus, gender must be taken more seriously.

Thanks to the initiatives of Dr. M.C. Nandeeshha and other colleagues, the Asian Fisheries Society (AFS) began addressing the topic of women in fisheries/aquaculture in 1990, and progressively expanded the work to global scale symposia, albeit of still modest attendance. Up until 2001, the AFS activities had been based on a “women in fisheries” approach, but after this, events were consciously renamed as “gender and fisheries”, including aquaculture, in an effort to be more inclusive of the people (women and men) and the development processes (Williams et al. 2002). In reality, most of the papers presented at the subsequent events have been on women, but more attention is being given to the development context. The AFS women/gender activities have been described elsewhere (e.g. Williams and Nandeeshha 2012) and will not be enumerated here. The Society’s contributions, although continuous, have been opportunistic and relied on a patch work of small resources contributed by people prepared to act as leaders and contributors, and explicit and implicit organisational support, including some small donor grants. Coupled with the modest funding and weak policy attention to gender in the fishery sector, progress has been slow but seems to be accelerating as major institutions and donors show an emerging interest in gender equality.

In 2011, our assessment following GAF3 of the slow progress concluded that women/gender studies and action: “(1) are not on the policy agendas and action plans and therefore minimal resources are devoted to them; (2) are not amenable to a single epistemology and different visions compete; and (3) require stronger conceptual foundations to be developed, disseminated and used” (Williams et al. 2012). Moreover, we identified a certain amount of research progress, at least in the more descriptive fields on women’s roles and contributions and structural efforts on institutions and supply chains. Progress was more modest on complex contextual analysis of ecological, economic and cultural systems, including inter-sectionality.

We wondered, however, how a wider group of interested people viewed the progress towards achieving greater gender equity and equality in the fishery sector, the problems faced, and the options for greater progress. We therefore carried out a survey to find out more.

Methods

We conducted a qualitative survey electronically, using Survey Monkey, to gather information for analysis. The survey was entitled: “Gender networks in aquaculture and fisheries: What works and what doesn’t?” The survey questionnaire consisted of two parts: basic demographic information and core, open ended interview questions. We compiled an e-mail list of 232 accessible names and addresses from previous and current network lists. The lists were: the lists previously run by one of us (Poh Sze Choo) out of the WorldFish Center, the subscribers of the Genderaquafish.org website, the present Google Group Genderaquafish and the GAF3

presenters. The call was deliberately not open to all social media groups because we wanted to focus on the views of insiders. Although overlaps among the lists were considerable, each list did have significant differences in membership. Forty-five people accepted the e-mail invitation to take part in the survey within the allotted time frame (19% of the 232 invited) and were sent the survey questionnaire; of these, 41 (91% of the acceptances) fully completed it. These responses, most providing considerable detail, formed the basis of our analysis.

The basic demographic questions included name, gender, age, nationality, country of work, field of expertise, type of work institution and details of participation in past AFS and other gender/women's networking in the fishery sector.

To structure the core questions, we used the framework of stages in network formation used in Actor Network Theory (ANT) (Callon 1986), namely Problematisation, Interresment, Enrolment and Mobilisation. The results provide more information on how each of these was used in our study. We chose this framework for several reasons. Actor Network Theory can consider networks as any scale. The different networks that each of the respondents had in mind could have been operating at scales from project and local networks to national and international networks. The networks do not require formal definition, and indeed many of the gender in fisheries and aquaculture networks are informal, e.g. the Asian Fisheries Society network, ephemeral, e.g. project networks, or weakly formal in the case of some national and regional efforts struggling to thrive.

Callon (1986) calls the process of forming a network of influence "translation". In the current study, we recognise that each of those interviewed has their own network in mind, although many of the answers also revealed that they also conceived of gender in the larger context of the fishery sector. All but nine of the respondents gave permission to be identified by name, and thus this permits some context to be revealed with respect to their comments.

The four core questions were:

- (1) Why do you think some networking activities worked and some did not? Please provide information for a network activity that worked and why and also one that did not and why?
- (2) Please briefly describe an event or incident you have experienced or observed that illustrates an interesting aspect (good or bad) of what is required to make changes in the way woman/gender issues are handled in the fishery sector.
- (3) What next steps do you think are needed to ensure that gender in aquaculture and fisheries networks are sustained, grow and have influence?
- (4) Who do you think still has to be persuaded that gender is important in the fishery sector and why are they important to making progress?

Results

Demographic and background information on respondents

The majority (78%) of the respondents were women, and the proportions of respondents less than 50 years old, or 50 years or greater were about equal. The attempt to gauge field of expertise using simple categories (fisheries, aquaculture, gender or all of these) was not very successful, but the discipline expertise responses were more informative of backgrounds. Disciplines named were: gender, anthropology, sociology, geography, economics, trade, policy, management, home economics, food and post-harvest technology, rural development, social and economic programme development, education, conservation, and social compliance.

The survey attracted nearly half its responses from the universities (19 respondents), and relatively few from government research institutes (7). Seven respondents were from development agencies, four were students and four were from NGOs. The majority of respondents came from Asia (24) and, by country, the Philippines (9) and India (6) provided the greatest number of respondents. Other respondents were from Africa (4), Europe (7), North America (5) and Oceania (1).

Most respondents had attended one or more of the AFS women/gender events, especially those in the last decade, or the IIFET2012 gender sessions and had used social media networks and websites for gender in aquaculture and fisheries. Two thirds of respondents had been involved in creating gender strategies, doing gender research, working for development projects incorporating gender, gender training, and formal gender networks and in institutions that were interested in gender (Annex). Some respondents were still students or interested others wanting to participate. This indicated that we had attracted responses from those active in many modes, but primarily in the research and planning modes, rather than in roles in grass-roots women's/gender networks. Although we attracted several respondents from development assistance agencies, we did not solicit formal submissions on behalf of the agencies.

Analysis of the responses

Although the four core questions were structured according to the four ANT stages, responses did not always line up with the stages. Each response from each respondent, therefore, was considered and then allocated to one or more of the four stages: Problematisation, Interresment, Enrolement, Mobilisation.

Problematisation

The Problematisation step of network formation concerns defining the problem, its causes and consequences and the relevant actors or parties to address it. Of all the translation stages, the survey responses were richest with respect to this stage, referring to current reality under three recurring themes: (1) gender is only "bycatch" in fisheries, (2) we don't have the facts yet, and (3) gender is only weakly institutionalised.

The first theme, gender is “bycatch” only, refers to the low awareness and apathetic or even negative attitudes towards gender. Mohammad Nuruzzaman (Bangladesh) said: “*the whole domain is in the hands of people who care less about gender issues*”. He noted that officials were often gender-blind in their operations and society has suffered “*as a result of persistent, deeply-rooted patriarchy*”.

Gender bias and ignorance can be fatal to women’s prospects. Adelke M. Lydia (Nigeria) said that “*some fishing communities discriminate against women and restrict them to some fishing activities, lowering their incomes and restricting livelihood diversification*”. Fishing communities are not the only ones who discriminate. “*Natural scientists continue to believe that biological - rather than social - differences circumscribe men's and women's roles and benefits from the fishery sector*” (Anon., female). Another female respondent found that top administrators, mainly males, lacked sensitivity to the value contributed by women in aquaculture and fisheries. Even when women have a major fishery role they are excluded. Sun-ae Li (Japan, Korea) pointed out that the Korean women divers, though important to their families’ incomes and the maintenance of the fishing community are completely excluded from decision making in the community, local administration and government, and their knowledge and experience ignored. In Sumatra, where women control 80% of fish marketing (Dedi Adhuri, Indonesia), they are not noticed.

Jariah (Malaysia) suggested that the fishery and aquaculture curricula include the human aspects to overcome the total focus on technical issues of current professionals. “*Professionals are unable to see how (the people) are situated in the bigger picture*”.

The second theme concerned the need for more facts on women/gender in aquaculture and fisheries because we are now arguing from only a weak knowledge base. The fishery sector needs disaggregated statistics and illuminating knowledge. A female Indonesian respondent noted that national statistics exclude data on women’s roles and household economic contributions. Another went beyond statistics and stressed the need for “*better (research) methods ... to understand gender roles for ... livelihood projects*”.

A paucity of data also means that the priority for work on women/gender also slips down the agenda. B.Shanthi (India) experienced this first hand: “*In 2001, when I wanted to work on women/gender issues in aquaculture, I was discouraged by people saying there was no women's participation, only men's. I took up this challenge and made a rigorous survey in Tamil Nadu, South India, to find out whether there was any women's participation in aquaculture. I studied 13 cases of women's participation, proving their importance and made myself visible as a gender expert in the field of aquaculture research.*”

One respondent, and also K.Holvoet (Belgium, Benin and West Africa), saw progress now that a big change is happening to consider not just the fish but commodity and value chain approaches. “*This gives a lot of room to make women's roles visible*”.

The third theme, gender is only weakly institutionalised, is considered responsible for low human capacity and low priority. Gender research and projects are often only sideline fields to the

main field of work. This observation caused Ramachandran C. (India) to say: *“for most of the GAF actors, being either fishery or aqua biological/sociological researchers, gender seems to be the bycatch rather than the catch”*. A female respondent said: *“network members are overloaded with day jobs”*.

A serious consequence of the marginal nature of gender work is that it is the first component to be dropped in a cutback, leading to what Callon (1986) calls “depunctualisation,” or the reverse of “punctualisation,” the synergistic build-up of capacity in a growing network (i.e. the Mekong River Basin (MRB) fisheries programme in 2002). This phenomenon was noted by one respondent who also was critical of the shift in focus of women/gender efforts. She wrote: *“When the ‘women in fisheries’ concept was changed to ‘gender in fisheries’, suddenly the tone of regional and national networks became thoroughly ‘macho’ in the Mekong River Basin. Simultaneously, overworked male project officers were burdened with nurturing the networks, of which they had scant interest or background. Accumulated ‘corporate memory’ was lost, and regional meeting tasks were ‘outsourced’ to an external ... consultant with no regional experience”*. Notwithstanding this downsizing experience, the network is a survivor and has been sustained by the lower Mekong countries and the Commission for more than 13 years (Williams 2012), thanks in part to a solid legal foundation based on many years of volunteer groundwork.

A final major consequence of the poor institutionalisation of gender is that networks are perceived as having a weak capacity to initiate action and reach decision-makers at the very top – *“the unconverted”* – according to Jennie Dey de Pryck (Italy). We surmise that this may be partly because the networks have not defined these as objectives to reach. A female respondent urged that the (GAF) *“networks should be more strategic and ambitious in their activities, rather than just doing the minimum of holding research and extension symposia and occasional training”*. Strategy was considered important in reaching to senior policy makers. Jennie Dey de Pryck recommended using the networks to develop alliances and having a coordinated strategy at major conferences to influence the policy makers, donors, media, etc.

Interessment

In the Interessment stage, the primary actors recruit others, especially those who recognise the primary actors’ authority, to the network. Survey responses concerning this stage of translation covered two themes, namely, the “who” and “how”. In each theme, we could distinguish ideas and suggestions that were concerned with two different types of actors in the network, i.e. the more academic actors who we will call researchers for short, and the grassroots actors, i.e. the fish supply chain actors and their representatives.

In terms of who is or should be the actors during Interessment, several researchers felt that, from their experience, a core group was key to the success of networks. A female respondent observed that: *“a core group of members (...) needs to be developed. A number of dynamic, charismatic people need to be identified and encouraged”*.

Continuing the thread of the core group, Lasse Lindström (Sweden) said “*an individual/individuals who ‘drives’ the network, and that there is funding for that person(s)*” are crucial. The importance of funding for the maintenance and survival of the groups was little acknowledged, perhaps indicating that respondents tended not to be responsible for fund raising in their day to day work. Others went into more depth on the pivotal importance of champion(s) and leaders. Cristina P. Lim felt said that we need “*a Champion (...) to encourage others,*” and (Maripaz L. Perez, Philippines) “*influence other leaders to consider gender in all policies*”. “*The champions must be ... perceived by other network members to be fair and working beyond his or her self-interest* (Susana V. Siar, Philippines). And, finally, successful past networks have been served by “*a strong, focused and enterprising leader willing to take the network to well defined goal(s) regardless of international sponsorship*” (Margaret Massette, Uganda). The respondents, however, did not make a distinction between different types of networks – research and grass-roots networks – and whether the same need for a champion held across network types.

Networks are more than leaders, however, and several respondents called for a broader buy-in, and especially including the young. K. Kuperan Viswanathan (Malaysia) suggested this could be achieved, for the researcher group, by “*documenting and disseminating the findings to a broader audience and providing leadership to young people*”. Others suggested: mentoring and recognising people for their work (Susana V. Siar), –“*most women (researchers and workers) desire to be recognised and appreciated*” (Cristina P. Lim).

A fundamental tool for recruiting others to the network was recommended by Susana V. Siar, namely a directory of all those involved.

In the field, the most critical Interestment step is to become more inclusive, getting beyond researchers talking to each other and becoming involved with the fish workers and organisations that support them. A female respondent said: “*fisherfolk women should be more actively empowered to make things happen for themselves... The discourse is still at the level of women in fisheries but not gender, where men's needs are addressed as well*”. The means for actively empowering women was not addressed by respondents, although Adeleke M Lydia stressed one point, namely that “*the grassroots (should be allowed) to suggest possible solutions to their own problems*”. J. Cleofe (Philippines) urged that women/gender actor networks strive to become active in sector mainstream meetings, conferences, and policy discussions. “*We want to be treated as a regular member of a bigger network or collaborative effort. In many conferences or meetings, the voices from women in the community or the women fishers themselves are seldom heard*”. Marilyn Porter (Canada) urged the GAF (network) to reach out to the smaller NGOs and advocacy groups for women in their communities.

Many practical suggestions were given for how Interestment might be advanced in the researchers' network. In so doing, many respondents mentioned the current positive actions that should be continued as well as what more are needed. Nikita Gopal (India) found the plus points of the AFS network to be regular updates, effective use of social media, and easily downloadable, recent documents. The minus points are that the network does not elicit much discussion and clearly needs some mechanism to foster focused discussion. Further, the mailing list should be

made more active by stimulating issues for discussion (Ria, Indonesia). One respondent cautioned, however, that the network must be careful not to overload members with messages.

Maripaz L. Perez compared a successful and a not so successful network from her experience in industrial and technological research. The unsuccessful network failed to sustain activities when members become competitors and thus lapsed as a community of practice. We suggest that this could be a risk for women's entrepreneurs' networks in fisheries and aquaculture.

Regular events are considered important as mechanisms for enlisting others, increasing memberships, and creating a ripple effect. Sara stressed that *“workshops, mini-symposiums etc in conjunction with another conference could be a way to attract people who would not normally attend a "gender thing", and thus create the chance to influence a wider audience”*. Global meetings might be costly but regional ones more feasible. Nikita Gopal suggested *“interactions on focus areas which could lead to similar work being taken up simultaneously in many locations/regions/countries, linked also with national and international bodies like FAO, ICAR etc”*.

The responses also implied that network leaders need to recognise the importance of personal comfort zones and network preferences. Tesfom, M.A. (Eritrea) appreciated that the GAF informal network *“is also making use of the Fisheries Social Scientists (FSS) Facebook page and disseminates relevant information through the FSS”*.

Many respondents emphasised the necessity of gender mainstreaming at different levels and the need to make women's roles much more visible in society. Several recommended that gender needs to be considered in all situations, not just where women currently work. Gunilla Tegelskär Greig (Sweden) drew from a non-fisheries gender course she had undertaken which *“was an eye opener in terms of how you can put a gender perspective on everything, including building roads etc. We cannot just focus on the sub-sectors/initiatives which predominantly include women (most notably the post-harvest sector) but have to work much more broadly to change things, to change perceptions and structural issues”*. This will mean educating the experts. Jariah found in a training course on gender in aquaculture that *“the majority of the researchers/scientists with no gender awareness indicated that there is no need to focus on gender since they felt their work already benefited people. During the workshop, we found that ... most of those never exposed to gender were "men with folded arms" but after a few interactive sessions we were able to change their perspective”*.

Enrolement

During the Enrolement stage, roles are defined and actors accept their roles. Except for examples in the Philippines and India many of the responses concerning Enrolment were about what could be done, rather than what is already in train. This stage of network development is still immature. As with the above Interestment responses, we organised the responses into the “who” and the “how.”

Again, strong views were expressed that grass roots women must be involved, to be conscientised and to build solidarity. J. Cleofe said that involving women from the community/grassroots brings *“the women ... face to face with other women, (where they) share their experiences and build networks and linkages, creating solidarity among women. Network sponsored study tours are also effective in facilitating learning and solidarity. Results and discussions from high level meetings and conferences should be shared with the grassroots women”*. Further, a respondent stressed that women should be consulted on their needs and preferences.

Many respondents favoured enrolling those at the top, but several cautioned to be alert to gender complexities at the top of organisations. Mohammad Nuruzzaman warned that the rare female leaders may behave in *“a patriarchal way”* although he conceded that, in the main, *“it is men who need to be “brainwashed!”*. B. Shanthi was also in favour of involving professional women in the support of gender networks but cautioned not to take their support for granted due to their other work pressures. She also raised the dilemma that women in senior position may not be supported by women around them, even when addressing gender issues. *“Realise that many women cannot concentrate on networking activities due to other official commitments which are time bounded and priority based. Also, women may envy another woman if she gets to a top rank and can pull her down without allowing her to succeed. Women do not support another woman when she is addressing gender issues. Some women who still want to be in the good books of men can play double roles.”*

Jennie Dey de Pryck listed major (UN) declarations, action programmes and guidelines in the fisheries sector, in rural and economic development, the Post-2015 Development Agenda, and others. Using these major fields as targets for gender action, she suggested inviting a small group of very distinguished persons to serve as committed "patrons" or "opinion leaders" to help carry the advocacy messages (based on good data) to the top decision- makers.

Marilyn Porter wants the GAF network *“broadened in terms of geography. I would like to see the feminists involved in North Atlantic fishery networks more engaged with researchers in the Asian region”*.

Turning now to the “how” of Enrolement, respondents focused on integrating the gender dimension to strengthen the fisheries mainstream, and creating incentives for people to undertake active roles in gender networking.

K. Holvoet recommended that gender communication should be integrated into fisheries networks such as Sarnissa (aquaculture). We need *“strong gender focal points in fisheries departments for making the case that attention to gender increases contributions to the economy,”* as is already being done in agriculture.

Mainstream conferences that create the space for researchers to focus on gender are appreciated, such as the day dedicated to gender at the 2012 IIFET Conference in Dar es Salaam,

Tanzania (Sara), and the regular GAF symposia as part of the Asian Fisheries Society Fisheries and Aquaculture forums.

Achieving a presence in mainstream activities often requires a locally credible presenter, according to Lena Westlund (Sweden). *“In Bangladesh, where I worked as a DFID team leader for an institutional development project on fish farming within the Grameen Bank group, we struggled to change attitudes at all levels. It takes a long time to change attitudes – often one small step at the time (and in a way that matches the needs). An example from Bangladesh was to accept that I, as a woman (and foreigner), was not always the best person to pass messages. We briefed our senior male consultants and had them talk to decision-makers. Also at the community level, it was easier to “use” local men to discuss with men on gender issues.”*

With regard to incentives for people to enroll, a woman respondent suggested researchers would be motivated by working on joint papers, joint presentations, joint proposals or joint research. Especially, internet-based discussions needed substance rather than chit-chat as the basis for working together.

Social networking among people was also seen as an important element in how to enroll people. Gunilla Tegelskär Greig gave the example of the social events accompanying the 2010 ICSF "Recasting the net" workshop (ICSF 2010).

Mobilisation

In the fourth stage of translation, namely Mobilisation, primary actors become spokespeople for the network and seek to mobilise passive actors. Many respondents contributed with passion on who should be mobilised and why. Sara, Lena Westlund and Marilyn Porter emphatically said *“everyone,”* indicating frustration with the *status quo*. “Men” were also a group that was mentioned with passion. One female respondent remarked that *“amazingly, after decades of conducting gender sensitivity workshops, it is still “men” who must become attuned to the importance of gender”*. Ayanboye Oluyemi (Nigeria) stressed also the importance of conscientisation of women: *“the women themselves, especially the grassroots women should come out of their shells, know and show their importance in the community”*. Respondents did not suggest how women’s emergence might occur or be encouraged. In numbers of responses, overwhelmingly, the survey respondents felt that leaders and policy makers in governments, and at various levels of organisation and programme implementation, still have to be persuaded of the importance of gender in aquaculture and fisheries. Typically, respondents did not specify which leaders needed greater gender awareness, who should persuade them, and how gender should be mainstreamed in the fisheries sector.

In the views of the respondents, the lack of progress in Mobilisation can be explained by the depth of change needed. In summary, the responses considered, first, that governments, policy makers and bosses must recognise the importance of gender in fisheries and aquaculture since they set the political and development agenda. Second, managers and extension officers are important because development projects go through their office for implementation. Third, researchers need

to be convinced, especially those from the natural sciences; and fourth, donors and funders have to be convinced. The fact that donor funds are still not forthcoming means that a case has still not been made for support for gender action in the fisheries sector.

How mobilisation can proceed elicited several suggestions. For researchers, Nikita Gopal offered that *“interactions on focus areas which could probably lead to similar work being taken up simultaneously in many locations/regions/countries”*. Also, hold regular discussions on emerging gender issues. Achini (Sri Lanka) added that the network should hold dialogues and aim to produce positive outcomes or at least policy change. She stressed the need for *“positive participation of all possible stakeholders, not only elite gender specialists”*. Corazon Plete-Macachor (Philippines) stressed the benefits of linkages among women fish workers, government agencies and university technical and educational experts.

Respondents were concerned for long-term continuity and sustainability. Marilyn Porter had found that *“top down heavily funded and controlled projects work much less well than more humble efforts to work together”*. K. Holvoet shared lessons from the Department for International Development (DFID, United Kingdom)-FAO-Sustainable Fisheries Livelihood Programme (SFLP) experiences. *“Gender networking persisted for a short while after the project but during that time there was much less attention for gender in fisheries to take the network to a higher level. In the past few years, attention has increased and so there is probably more funding available and so more chance that networking will last. Within FAO’s fisheries department and its gender division, there was no sustainability because of the lack of focal points and lack of a mainstreaming vision.”* So attention only resided with those with a personal interest. *“In the SFLP project and (in national) fisheries departments, a network was set up between gender experts and fisheries departments but focal points for gender in the fisheries departments didn't have clear Terms of Reference, mandates and didn't have the means (financial and technical) and so in only a few cases did the networking sustain. SFLP developed tools for gender analysis and gender mainstreaming and this was a very interesting way of starting the network as it brought together the different levels (micro, meso, and macro) and multidisciplinary teams. But maintaining the networks is expensive and asking for commitment of personnel is often not possible.”*

This analysis from a major field and policy project is a sobering lesson on the immense challenges of mainstreaming gender in fisheries and aquaculture. From anecdotal evidence, we know that other projects have had similar experiences. These experiences merit a wider analysis of the cultural, institutional – international and national – and economic conditions in which this outcome is embedded so that the depressing outcomes are not continually repeated.

Constant communication and creation of active chapters in local regions were recommended by a female respondent. Amplifying the importance of on-the-ground action, Jennie Dey de Pryck pointed out that, in a project in Kenya, *“promotion of the use of mobile phones for women fish processors and traders to access up-to-date information on markets/prices, compiled daily by the Kenya Marine Fisheries Institute (in an International Labor Organisation Coop Africa programme)”* succeeded in improving profits. The success of the enterprises was an important element in Mobilisation.

Mobilisation requires building women's capacity by including women in all planning and decision-making (B. Shanthi), and creating "*equal access in education, micro-finance and credits, services and rights to new inventions and ideas*" (Tefom, M.A).

In practice, however, experiences differ. VijayaKhader (India) observed that networking to mobilise women through the Self Help Groups (SHG) in India worked well in some contexts but not in others even in the same states as successful projects. Some women were averse to changing their activities and technologies. Also in India, Piyashi DebRoy described how women of the Koli fishing community at Versova in Mumbai completely managed and operated the seafood stalls at the Versova Koli Seafood Festival. She suggested that this revealed entrepreneurial potential that could be used in fish businesses in daily life and lead to improved socio-economic conditions. She had not observed such fishery initiatives by women in other regions of India. Shyam Salim (India) found from experience that if the "*expected benefit out of the networking activities weren't received in the time frame stipulated,*" then women's interest could not be sustained. He found that the more successful networking activities were those matched to the capacities and bargaining power of the women workers.

Mobilisation also requires resources such as funding and network members' time, "*rather than assuming networking takes place by itself*" (Lena Westlund). However, clear objectives are needed and research needs to be problem and not funds driven. "*Gender activism and research should converge,*" recommended Ramachandran C. Noting that a website (Genderaquafish.org) and Facebook account were welcome, Nelson Turgo (Philippines) went further to suggest that a dedicated centre funded by international agencies could be contemplated.

Courses that teach the basics of gender in aquaculture and fisheries ("GAF 101") were identified as a priority, and have long been a constant need from the grassroots to top decision-makers. For researchers, this would mean training materials, workshops in gender analysis in fisheries research and project planning and implementation, as well as seminars and conferences. Achieving this sort of basic capacity building for a wide swathe of experts, however, remains a distant possibility because existing sector experts are unaware of their own ignorance with respect to how gender can be addressed. To this end, basic training needs to be developed and made compulsory. One of the fundamental precepts should be explaining the difference between addressing "women" and "gender". Susana V. Siar narrated one of her own experience on this in which she was assigned the task in a project of addressing the gender aspects. "*After the session, one participant from a donor country asked what was meant by addressing gender in the project. So, I started telling him that the project would have to look at the different impacts that the project will bring about on men and women, at which point, he said, Oh, increasing the role of women in the project. I tried to explain that gender is not only about women, but I don't think I succeeded. My point is that many of us are stuck with the idea that gender and women are synonymous.*"

Discussion

From the above analysis of the gender networking survey responses, we conclude that respondents perceive reasonable progress in the Problematisation of gender in aquaculture and

fisheries. This has provided a general understanding of issues but has not been matched by strategic messaging to communicate the issues to key audiences. Although more detail is needed, existing knowledge is sufficient for more proactive messaging. Coinciding with, and perhaps partly the cause of, inadequate promotion of current knowledge, the field of action and research comprises only a limited set of actors. Gender is only weakly institutionalised in the sector and is merely “bycatch” or a “night” job for the interested network members. A part of this weak institutionalisation also is that the networks to which respondents referred were mainly informal and ephemeral, e.g. project based. Thus, they lacked definition of key responsibilities and objectives, such as reaching out and influencing key policy makers.

Consequently, the *Interessement* stage of translation is weakly developed, but respondents had a rich set of ideas on how to do it. Paramount among these was the need for champions and leaders, and an active core group, which respondents judged are still to emerge. The *Enrolement* stage is more weakly developed still and will not progress until the critical actors step up, plus sectoral and cultural shifts occur. *Mobilisation*, which relies on *Interessement* and *Enrolement*, will continue to be slow unless major opportunities for rapid progress can be seized.

On balance, we judge that network *Punctualisation* is occurring slowly. For example, the AFS GAF effort has managed continuity and a slow building of interest, despite meagre resources. The total is certainly greater than the sum of parts, but we also fear that progress is still so fragile that *depunctualisation* is an ever-present possibility in the face of the gendered and rapid nature of change in the sector (GAF4, 2013).

Through attention to the gender dimension in the fishery sector, what are the options for achieving greater gender equality, notably in fishery settings where masculinisation continues apace, often in connection with modernisation and capitalisation, e.g. declining women’s employment in Norwegian aquaculture (Maal 2013)? Researchers are mainly focused on deepening the problematisation of gender inequality, and especially its impacts on women. While important, this is a necessary but not sufficient base from which to create the translation, unless, as urged by Ramachandran C., gender activism and research converge, perhaps through the use of feminist research methodologies (Porter, 2014). Gender transformative research approaches, as being developed by the CGIAR Aquatic Agriculture Systems program (CGIAR AAS 2012), may be one way forward but they are still in a preliminary stage.

Central United Nations and national government gender/women’s agencies such as UN Women, have all but abandoned sectoral work programmes in favour of more general programmes such as ending violence against women, girl’s education, and reproductive health. Thus, we contend, change has to emanate from within the fishery sector. This is not likely to happen spontaneously from routine fishery policy that is gender-blind. Field projects are more likely to reveal new insights and pioneer new approaches. In fishery field projects, gender mainstreaming has been the primary strategy as most of the projects focused on development and poverty objectives, e.g. Lentisco and Alonso (2012). Also, the actor-networks peculiar to the fishery sector likely would resist attempts from outside the sector, e.g. from women, gender and feminist programmes, to intervene in core fishery conditions. As practised in projects, mainstreaming can

become shaky when the projects are ended, e.g. the cases of the SFLP and Mekong River Commission Secretariat experience. And at the present rate of uptake, centuries will be needed before all fisheries projects take up gender.

To us, the solution requires a bold activist step, rather than business-as-usual waiting for incremental and research efforts to mature and reach out to motivate change. The sector has sufficient knowledge now to make a campaign on gender equality. “We” – those who identify with the urgency for progress on gender or women’s equality in the fishery sector, need to put this knowledge to use and make the leap. If not us, then who? If us, then how?

Conclusion

We share the frustration at the slow progress expressed by many survey respondents. Indeed, if gender equality could be measured in the fishery sector, we would likely find it is declining rather than increasing. We also observe that, although more knowledge and experience are slowly accumulating from research and development projects, some of these are being rendered out-of-date by the pace of change.

Fishery policy is gender blind, creating a great obstacle to any priority being accorded to gender activities. Polite, albeit sustained, low key, unfunded, incremental progress is not enough to even hold the ground for gender equality. The time has come for the core group of women and men who care for the urgency of tackling gender inequality in the fishery sector to increase the visibility of the issue at the highest policy levels, to fashion urgent messages on the problems of gender inequality in aquaculture and fisheries, and advocate for the funding and resources to get people into “day jobs” in activism and research to do something about the inequality problems and lost opportunities. This is not a job for researchers or at least researchers alone, but for people who are prepared to take a stand and commit in order to mobilise others. However, researchers do have a vital role to play as, in parallel with the advocacy, much more research and data gathering are urgently needed.

Finally, we acknowledge that the perspectives of our respondents, largely researchers and development workers are but one part of the whole picture. We know little of the perspectives of the women and men at the grass-roots. And we need to also know the views of those at the top of agencies that are implementing fisheries programmes and projects in development agencies and fisheries departments.

Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the 41 survey respondents who took the time to share their perspectives in such depth, and make our task of analysis and reporting so challenging. They were: Adeleke M Lydia, Dedi Adhuri, Achini, J. Cleofe, Piyashi Deb Roy, Jennie Dey de Pryck, Nikita Gopal, Gunilla Tegelskär Greig, Holvoet, M. Jariah, K. Kuperan Viswanathan, Cristina P. Lim, Lasse Lindström, Margaret Masette, Mohammad Nuruzzaman, Ayanboye Oluyemi, Maripaz L. Perez, Corazon Plete-Macachor, Marilyn Porter, Ramachandran C., Ria, Sara, Dr. B. Shanthi, Ann

Shriver, Shyam.S.Salim, Sun-ae li, Susana V. Siar, Tesfom M A, Nelson Turgo, Prof.(Mrs) VijayaKhader, PhD, Lena Westlund and nine anonymous respondents. We also thank two anonymous reviewers for their constructive criticism.

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Annex: Gender in fisheries and aquaculture network activities in which respondents engaged.

1. Gender planning, strategy formulation
- 2010: International Collective in Support of Fish workers (ICSF); 2011: FAO; 2012: ICAR (India), NEPAD (Africa).
2. Gender research activities
- International: CGIAR Aquatic and Agriculture Systems, CIDA, DFID, European Union (EU), Japan, NORAD, Oxfam, SIDA, Too Big to Ignore project and regional agency funded projects, e.g. SEAFDEC/AQD, Memorial Univ. (Canada).
- National women/gender research activities: in India, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Tanzania and other countries, with institutional, national and international donor funds.
- Research themes included women/gender and agricultural innovation, climate change, seafood processing, food safety and HACCP, disaster management, donor dependency and social capital, fish value chains, environment, marine protected areas, pollution, HIV/AIDS, community based management for food and income, sustaining coastal fishing communities, migration, and reproductive health.
3. Development-project related gender activities
- Sustainable Fisheries Livelihood Programme (Africa)
- Technology consultant, FAO and other agencies gender projects on fish processing (Kenya)
- Work in FAO Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division
- UNIDO projects on labour law implementation in post-harvest sector
- Training in good shrimp farming practice for women farmers and farmer couples, post larvae collectors (Bangladesh).
4. Gender training workshops
- Organising gender workshop, module development and conducting the workshop sessions on empowering vulnerable stakeholder groups (AqASEM09 (Asia-Europe Meeting Aquaculture Platform) EU (2012)).
5. Participation in formal gender network(s), including institutional networks
- AKTEA (Europe), WINFISH (Philippines), Gender and Development (GAD) national focal person, Philippine Department of Science and Technology
- Asian Fisheries Social Science Research Network (in which some women/gender studies were done)
- FAO network of gender focal points from each division and department
- Bringing together feminist and natural resource management networks;
6. Participation in other fisheries and aquaculture activities that include gender themes
- Samudra (ICSF), EU-Framework Program 7 Project ASEM Aquaculture Platform, Fisheries Social Scientist Facebook Group.