

Dialogues in gender and coastal aquaculture: Gender and the seaweed farming value chain

With funding support and methodology inputs from SwedBio of the Stockholm Resilience Centre of Stockholm University, the Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries Section of the Asian Fisheries Society (GAFS) has joined with ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (project coordinator), ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (both in India) and Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute to implement a project on women in seaweed farming. Researchers from the Asian Institute of Technology and the Lagos State University, Nigeria, will also be on the project advisory group.

In seaweed and other coastal aquaculture enterprises, women are locally relevant yet considered marginal in business and development, presenting challenges for creating dialogues among equals that enable the women's voices and concerns to be heard. Recognising this and the important role women play in seaweed farming, location-specific gender dialogues in seaweed farming and collecting areas of Tamil Nadu, India, and coastal Kenya will explore viewpoints on who controls what resources and the political and economic relations that cause and are caused by the distribution of these resources. The gender dialogues are being designed to allow the participants to better understand the labour allocations for seaweed aquaculture and post-harvest, and provide a wider and hopefully joint understanding of livelihoods and the households' priority on labour distribution around different production as well as reproductive activities. Deepening gender dialogues would greatly assist in defining good practices and in learning by practising. Gender perspectives will also allow participants to better understand the access of different people to resources, particularly land/space. Conflicts over tenure in aquaculture need to be recognised. Attention will also be paid to markets as critical to the seaweed value chain and as institutions embedded in the aquaculture political economy.

The project will be undertaken in 2020 and final reports are due in early 2021. Its specific objectives are:

1. To find or create the motivation(s) at each site for holding the dialogues.
2. To promote engagement of fishers, farmers, researchers, policymakers, non-governmental organisations and industry representatives in participatory and interactive collaborations on gender and policy implications, including actors from outside the traditional fisheries/aquaculture field.
3. To elucidate how the impacts of globalised markets, small-scale fisheries guidelines implementations and contextualised institutions (formal and informal) determine conditions for exclusion and struggles of women at local levels.
4. To share views and experiences on how distribution of benefits and quality of participation affect social and economic advancement.
5. To indicate emerging areas of gender and environment policy inquiry.



Woman farming seaweed in Kenya, Africa. ©Twitter