

Women and Fish Markets: Lessons for a Research Agenda for Gender Equity

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**FORO ECONÓMICO
DE PESCA Y ACUACULTURA 2018**



Objective:

- Briefly discuss what current research on women and fisheries tells us about gender equity within the sector; and
- Why attention to gender issues is important.



1. Women play an integral role in all aspects of fisheries and aquaculture and thus contribute significantly to household livelihoods that rely on these economies.





2. These roles vary in different contexts, but women are especially prominent in post-harvesting activities, such as processing and distribution (marketing).





3. Yet, post-harvest activities have received much less attention in both research and development policy than has fish production (harvesting).

4. And, women have been excluded from national development policies and programs until only very recently .



5. The neglect of post-harvesting activities and the exclusion of women from research and policy *have created gender inequities* and differential impacts of economic change on men and women – *often to women's detriment.*



Fish Trade

Barbara Harriss, *Transitional Trade and Rural Development* (1981), observed:

*If Development depends not only on the generation of marketed surplus [increased production] but also on its transfer and redistribution; then analysis of the **way** this surplus is utilized and redistributed is essential.*

Thus, the role of fish traders in development becomes a relevant question as does the analysis of the political economy of commerce in a region.



Research on Women & Fish Markets

- Market processes are deeply informed, indeed governed, by social factors – e.g., gender, caste, religion, ethnicity, and native place.
- These factors underlie power relations and marketplace hierarchies, which differentially structure different traders' relationships to the market.



These structures become significant when development interventions are introduced because they inform who benefits and who "loses" from economic transformations – often in unanticipated ways.



Gender:

- Ideas about masculinity and femininity and power relations between men and women in the family and society
- Gender ideologies define women's work conditions and mobility, which impact livelihood opportunities and constraints in particular ways as economies undergo development and transformation.





Conclusion:

It's important and necessary to understand the way fish and aquaculture economies are gendered and embedded in social relations more broadly at the outset of Development planning if we are to work toward achieving gender equity.