

The Role of Women in the Growth and Development of Fisheries in Banate Bay, in the Philippines

Michael Bracamonte Dizon^a, ^aIloilo State College of Fisheries, Barotac Nuevo, Iloilo 5007 Philippines, Email: anozidmichael@gmail.com

The degree of participation of women in fisheries reflects the cultures, laws, and priority given by the state to ensure gender equity. This study assesses participation by women in managing and sustaining fisheries in Banate Bay, in the Philippines. The respondents were 712 women fisherfolk chosen through a convenience sampling. The researchers conducted site visits, 32 Focused Group Discussions (FGD) and in-depth interviews with selected Key Informant (KI) beneficiaries, particularly project implementers and partners. A large number of women is employed in the fisheries sector; about 54% are employed by municipal fishing and 62% by commercial fishing. In particular, women are engaged in economic activities such as mangrove planting and other community and environmental-based initiatives. Deficiencies in fishing equipment, lack of information, slowdown catch of fish, climate conditions, and transportation are obstacles for the sectoral participation of women. However, despite women's involvement in many areas in the fisheries sector, their participation is still underestimated and ignored. Productivity enhancement and marketing development programs need to be initiated to promote their participation in the management of fisheries resources.

Key words: *Marketing Development, productivity enhancement, women participation, fisheries, descriptive research, Banate Bay, Iloilo, Philippines.*



Introduction

In the developing world, women living in coastal areas participate in many different ways in the small scale fisheries sector – as gleaners, fishers, traders, fish farmers and processors (Weeratunge et al., 2010; Arenas and Lentisco, 2011). Paid and unpaid, their employment contributes to individuals, the household and the community at many different levels such as for food, income, and in cultural traditions (Weeratunge et al., 2010). Although the involvement of women in the fisheries sector has been recognized globally (Williams, 2008), more remains to be done to recognize and understand women's work in the sector (Weeratunge et al., 2010).

Women's degree of participation in the fisheries sector is an overall reflection of the cultures, laws, and the priority given by the state to ensure gender equity. Generally, women in Asia, especially those from depressed fishery households, participate actively in many fisheries activities, including aquaculture. However, the lower status accorded to women in many Asian societies means that their contribution to fisheries is undervalued and unrecognized (Siason et al., at <http://pubs.iclarm.net>).

Reported by Alonso-Población & Siar (2018), there has been increased recognition of the multiplicity of roles played by women in, and their crucial contributions to, the fisheries sector. However, they also report its stark contrast with the low presence of women in fisherfolk organizations around the globe, and the lack of access to decision-making positions in many formal fisheries-related organizations.

According to the World Fish Center in 2010, women's involvement in fisheries is more significant than is often assumed. According to current estimates from nine major fish producing countries, they comprise 46% of the labour force in small scale capture fisheries-related activities, including pre- and post-harvesting work. Their current engagement is shaped by rapidly dwindling fisheries stocks on one hand, and the increased global demand for fish on the other.

Moreover, formal statistics rarely reveal the extent and nature of the essential contribution of women to men's pursuit of fisheries, as a livelihood in many developing countries. Without women's hidden, under-enumerated and under-valued work, men might not be fishing at all. However, while men often take pride in their identity as fishers, it is not clear which identities are important to women.

In the Philippines, approximately 990,872 people are employed in the fisheries sector, about 5% of the country's labour force. Of these, 68% are employed by municipal fishing, 26% by aquaculture, and 6% by commercial fisheries. The 1995 census of population reports that



91.7% of those employed in fisheries are male and 8.2% are female, indicating that fisheries is a male-dominated field. On the other hand, the aggregate employment proportions by sex in the rural population are 70% male and 30% female. However, as demonstrated in a later section and revealed by various studies, the participation rate of women in the fishing sector is underestimated.

Also, due to the steady decline in marine fish production and the alarming degradation of the marine environment, there has been a marked shift towards developing strategies in favour of managing and sustaining coastal resources, through the involvement of different stakeholders. In the past decade, such an emphasis has gained ground and it would be worthwhile to examine the extent to which women as a distinct group have been involved (<http://pubs.worldfishcenter.org>).

Banate Bay is a common fishing ground of the municipalities of Anilao, Banate and Barotac Nuevo, all in the province of Iloilo, the Philippines. It has traditionally been recognized as one of the richest fishing grounds in Panay Island. The past decade showed that the harvest from the Bay has significantly declined due to widespread over-exploitation and habitat degradation driving the marginal and sustenance fisherfolks to live a miserable life. Various agencies and institutions in the Philippines have done a wide array of coastal management programs, yet public concern is still inadequate. This was due to the contemporary top-down planning and bureaucratic procedures effecting minimal intervention municipally. With the passage of the Local Government Code of 1991 otherwise known as RA 7160, the Local Government Units were able to address their own problems despite limited resources. At this time two government officials organized a group that would help save the Bay. The Banate Bay Resource Management Council Inc. (BBRMCI), a community-based group, was organized in 1996. It had 19 regular members, representing the three towns, the province and non-governmental organizations (<http://oneocean.org>).

The importance and contribution of women in the fishery sector, and their dual role in production and reproduction, point to the need to identify gender roles in the sector. Gender concerns can only be identified and addressed by looking at the various gender stereotypes in the sector; and identifying its gender roles and their impacts in promoting or hindering the involvement of women in fisheries research, development and management. The resulting knowledge would help formulate effective interventions to promote the participation of women in the management of fisheries resources (<http://pubs.worldfishcenter.org>).

A response was made to the facts presented. The further dissemination of critical legislation that endeavours to improve the position of women in society, most especially in the fisheries sector, was also needed. Thus, legislation such as the Republic Act 7192 (1991), and also the Women in Development and Nation Building Act, recognizes and promotes the integration of



women as full and equal partners of men in development, in nation-building and other productive endeavours. The Republic Act 7160 or Local Government Code (1991) provides for the inclusion of women as sectoral representatives in the local government unit. The New Family Code (1987) eliminated many of the provisions of the old Civil Code which discriminated against women. Presidential Decree 633 (1975) created a National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (<http://pubs.iclarm.net>). This paper will examine participation by determining women's views on the growth and development of Community-Based Coastal Resources Management in Banate Bay. The snapshots on women in fisheries covers the Banate Bay which includes Banate, Anilao and Barotac Nuevo and Barotac Viejo.

Objectives of the study

The study is intended to address the promotion of socio-economic structure, and equal opportunities and rights for men and women. It aims to facilitate gender mainstreaming in the growth and development of fisheries in Banate Bay, Iloilo, Philippines. Specifically, it seeks to examine both the participation of women in developing strategies in favour of managing and sustaining fisheries, and various obstacles related to women's contribution to the socio-economic development and diversification of Banate Bay.

Methodology

This research was funded by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences RO6 (project cost: Php 300, 000.00). It was designed to generate qualitative and qualitative data on women's participation in the growth and development of community-based resource management in Banate Bay for 270 calendar days (February – September 2016). The researcher utilized a modified questionnaire of Matthias Knappe of the International Trade Centre. The ITC is the technical cooperation agency of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) for operational, enterprise-oriented aspects of trade development. The questionnaire was translated to Hiligaynon, a local dialect of people inhabiting Panay, Negros, and other islands in the central Philippines.

There were 712 randomly selected women fisherfolk in Banate Bay involved in the study. They were chosen through a convenience sampling. In approaching the above topics of investigation, the researchers conducted site visits, 32 Focused Group Discussions (FGD) and in-depth interviews with selected Key Informant (KI) beneficiaries, particularly project implementers and partners. All field-generated information and data were used for the analysis and interpretation of assessment results.

Results and Discussion

The result shows there were 130 women fisherfolks from Barotac Nuevo who participated in the study: Lanas (30 or 23.08 %), Guintas (30 or 23.08 %), Lamintao (30 or 23.08%), Palaciawan (10 or 7.69%), Tinori-an (20 or 15.38%) and Tiwi (10 or 7.69%). Lanas, Guintas and Lamintao comprise the greatest number of respondents. For Anilao, 161 women of which were from: Badiang (30 or 18.63 %), Sta. Rita (35 or 21.74 %), Dangulaan (42 or 26.09 %), Sambag-Culob (12 or 7.45%), Pantalan (12 or 7.45%) San Carlos (15 or 9.32%) and Serallo (15 or 9.32%). Dangulaan comprised the greatest number of respondents.

Further, Banate has 265 women fisherfolk who participated in the study: Fuentes (26 or 9.81%), Belen (43 or 16.23%), Alacaygan (25 or 9.43%), Poblacion (24 or 9.06%), Zona Sur (14 or 5.28%) Bularan (26 or 9.81%) Sitio Sulangan (17 or 6.42%), San Salvador (17 or 6.42%), Talokgangan (Small Fisherman) – 27 or 10.19%, Talokgangan (46 or 17.35%). Talokgangan comprised the greatest number of respondents. The data also shows that there were 156 participants from Barotac Viejo: Sto. Domingo (19.23%), Poblacion (15 or 9.62%), Sivilla (17 or 10.90%), San Roque (21 or 13.46%), San Juan (20 or 12.82%) Sitio Princesa (14 or 8.97%) San Francisco (12 or 7.69%), Santiago (12 or 7.69%) and San Fernando (15 or 9.62). Sto. Domingo comprised the greatest number of women in the area.

As to employment data, most of women in Barotac Nuevo (87.69%) are engaged in fishing activities. In particular, Barangay Palaciawan practice fish culture (pantat or catfish). Fish processing of “ginamos” (shrimp fish), harvesting of “sisi” (oyster) and making of “uga” (dried fish) are mostly practised by women in Barangays of Lanas, Lamintao and Palaciawan. In addition, women in Anilao are most likely to engage in selling (98.14%). Fisherfolk in Barangay Sta. Rita, Dangulaan and Pantalan also practice fish processing of “ginamos” (shrimp fish) and making of “uga” (dried fish).

The involvement of women in Banate Bay has been given little importance, but it is significant in economic and social value. In the Philippines as reported by Siason from the University of the Philippines - Visayas, approximately 990,872 people are employed in the fisheries sector, about 5% of the country's labour force. Of these, 68% are employed by municipal fishing, 26% by aquaculture, and 6% by commercial fisheries. The 1995 census of population reports that 91.7% of those employed in fisheries are male and 8.2% are female, indicating that fisheries is a male-dominated field. On the other hand, the aggregate employment proportions by sex in the rural population are 70% male and 30% female.

This study revealed that the participation rate of women in fishing in Banate Bay is high.

Table 1: Employment Data of Women in Banate Bay

However, most number of women in Banate and Barotac Viejo are engaged in vending fish in their communities (67.55% and 88.46%, respectively). The data is shown in Table 1.

This study was found relevant to the study of Firiana and Stacey (2012) on women's role in Pantar Island in Pantar Island, Nusa Tenggara Timur Province, located in the area of the Alor Marine Conservation Plan of the Coral Triangle Initiative. They examined women's participation in pre-production, fishing and seaweed farming activities, and post-harvest, including marketing. The data were collected in four communities through both focus group discussions with women and men, and key informant interviews with village leaders and fisherwomen. The results provided a local context-specific analysis of the role of women in small scale fisheries, demonstrating that women do fish and participate in a range of fishery-related activities which in turn contribute significantly to household food security and income; an important, but frequently overlooked stakeholder group in the small scale fishery sector. They recommended that women must be included in future conservation and fishery planning.

	Barotac Nuevo (n = 130)	Anilao (n = 161)	Banate (n = 265)	Barotac Viejo (n = 156)
<i>Employment</i>				
	%	%	%	%
Pagpangisda (fishing)	87.69	68.94	5.28	53.21
Ginadala sa Palapala (transport to fish market)	52.31	41.61	5.28	66.67
Ginalibod (peddling)	82.31	93.79	11.32	60.26
Pagpadako sang Isda (fish culture)	0.77	1.24	15.85	1.28
Pagbaligya (vending)	73.08	98.14	67.55	88.46
Pagproseso o pagreserba (processing and preservation)	2.31	1.86	39.62	44.87
Impormal/wala bayad (kaangay sang paghugas sang banyera, pagtagik kag pagneting) (Informal/unpaid women support)	39.23	20.50	6.42	7.05

According to *Tambuyog Development Center in the Philippines*, women's labour is not properly valued despite their involvement in fishing activities. The fishing industry is focused on economically important production activities for the market, whereas women's activities are usually for household consumption, and are not subjected to valuation. During one of the Focus Group Discussions, women had mentioned their various tasks in ensuring the survival

of their household. However, they are often considered only extensions of their male counterparts, particularly in fishing activity.

As to women in fisheries initiatives, Banate Bay has several organizations which cover advocacy, networking and capacity building – 6 in Barotac Nuevo, 3 in Anilao, 5 in Banate and 7 in Barotac Viejo. “*May ara bala pag edukar sang mga tawo nahanungod sa fisheries?*” (*Is there any association who is educating people about fisheries?*). There are fund sources like BFAR, Iloilo State College of Fisheries (ISCOF) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) that provide training to women fishers related to education, series of lectures, mangrove planting activity and clean-up drives.

Table 2: The Role of Women in the Growth and Development of Banate Bay, Iloilo, Philippines

Aspects of Fisheries Development and Management	Municipalities			
	Barotac Nuevo (n=130)	Anilao (161)	Banate (265)	Barotac Viejo (156)
	%	%	%	%
<i>Tanan nga Aspato sa Fisheries (whole sector)</i>				
Nagaintra sa tanan nga aspato sang fisheries kaangay sa pagpangisda, pagbaligya, kag iban pa (<i>Concentrates on the whole sector of fisheries</i>)	79.92	93.17	62.64	100.00
Pagpangita sang kinahanglanon para sa "fisheries" (<i>Supplies sourcing</i>)	39.23	33.54	33.96	39.74
Pagtatap sa mga tawo kag pagpaathag sang ila mga responsibilidad (<i>Crew/staff management and marketing responsibilities and duties</i>)	42.31	38.51	34.72	51.92
<i>Komunikasyon (Communication)</i>				
Paghatag sang aktibo nga komunikasyon samtang ang asawa ngapangisda (Provides an essential communication link while the spouse is at sea)	70.00	59.01	59.01	76.28
<i>Tenedorya (Bookkeeping)</i>				
Nagalista sang tanan nga gasto kag ginansiya (Keeps track of expenditure and revenues)	14.62	63.35	30.19	64.74

Nagaproseso sang mga papeles kag iban pa nga mga kinahanglanon sa bangko kag sa ahensya (Deals with the bank and state fiscal or other requirements)	0	4.97	23.40	23.72
<i>Pagbaligya (Vending)</i>				
Nagahibalo sang presyo sang isda (Keeps track of current prices to actively selling fish)	83.85	100	65.66	85.26
Nagatukib kag nagahibalo sang mga pagbag o sa merkado (Finds the best deals and proactive market development)	59.23	88.20	65.66	73.08
<i>Supportang Praktikal (Practical Back-up)</i>				
Nagahatag sang kinahanglanon nga serbisyo adlaw-adlaw (Provides essential routine logistical functions)	13.08	42.24	41.51	63.46
Nagapatigayon sang mga kinahanglanon kag mga trabahador (Picks up equipment and crew)	7.69	22.36	29.81	28.85

As shown in Table 2, a large percentage of women in Banate Bay concentrate on whole areas of fisheries such as fishing, vending, peddling, informal support, culture and processing or preservation and many others (79.92% in Barotac Nuevo, 93.17% in Anilao, 62.64% in Banate and 100% in Barotac Viejo). Women engaged in vending constitute a larger portion; 83.85% in Barotac Nuevo, 100% in Anilao, 65.66% in Banate and 65.66% in Barotac Viejo. Although, a little portion of women deals with the bank and state fiscal or other requirements in fisheries (0% in Barotac Nuevo).

In his symposium paper “Women in Fisheries in the Philippines” I.M. Siason reported on women's issues and gender roles. In the project site of Batan, Panay Island, women were trained in tilapia cage culture which involves feeding, sampling, cage cleaning, and harvesting. Also, women were assigned the tasks of financial recording and record keeping. This result, as reflected in the project document of Siason, supports the view that women in Banate Bay perform bank and other financial transactions (4.97% in Anilao, 23.40% in Banate and 23.72% in Barotac Viejo).

Obstacles involving women's participation

There are certain factors that discourage women from participating in income-generating activities and other development tasks in Banate Bay. “*What are the principal factors that discourage you from entering the fisheries sector?*” This question prompted women to argue



what made their participation in fisheries limited, and what affects their will in independently pursuing programs and projects in Banate Bay. External factors or constraints imposed upon women includes hectic timetables, bad weather/rainy season, distance, lack of fishing equipment, lack of information, slowdowns in the fish catch, and transportation. Health status/conditions and household obligations are among the psychological constraints imposed upon them. For aspects concerning earnings (Economic Aspects), one must look to financial crises, lack of financial capital to invest, limited income and financial capital resources as the key variables affecting women participation in the growth and development of Banate Bay, Iloilo, Philippines.

Conclusions

There is a need for planners and policy-makers to incorporate gender issues in planning and design of activities or extension programs that are intended for fisheries. They can thereby supplement the traditional roles of women, and open up opportunities for new or expanded roles and responsibilities for women in Banate Bay.

The institutionalization of technical assistance and information dissemination is needed, for women to address the gaps in their participation in the fisheries sector in Banate Bay. Women need training for entrepreneurship, pertaining but not limited to business practices and financial management, to further strengthen their commitment in small trading enterprises. Health assistance is also a priority.

Women continue to define their role in the growth and development of Banate Bay. They face non-recognition of their participation in management bodies, and lack of access to economic resources as just some of the constraints. There is a need for the government to pursue intervention programs that will systematically examine women's participation. Programs are also needed to attend to all the problems and needs of the family and household of women, to safe-keep and allocate their earnings, and manage their household budget. There is also a need to encourage women to engage in fish processing and preservation in Banate Bay.



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