A light blue world map is centered in the background of the slide, showing the continents of North America, South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australia.

# Gender and Ocean

## Recognition of women's roles as a building block for sustainable living with the ocean

Cornelia E Nauen  
Mundus maris  
Sciences and Arts for Sustainability asbl

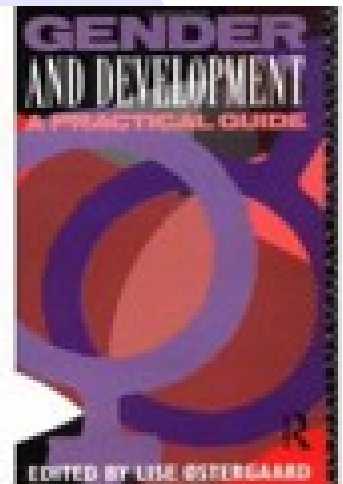
# A learning journey for better futures

In 1992, Lise Østergaard a Danish psychologist and politician, published the book "Gender and Development"

Drawing attention to often non-explicit assumptions on household configuration and general social organisation that pervaded the underlying concepts of national accounting services and development paradigms.

1. Male-headed households assumed when a high percentage of households in the mining belt in Southern Africa were female-headed because of extended absences of men.

2. Extension programmes for men's cash crops, none for the women producing food for local consumption ...



# What is the challenge?

In 2002, a group of scientists carried out a meta-analysis of case studies from four continents to ask the question of

1. the role of women in fisheries and aquaculture and
2. whether women could contribute to the transition towards sustainability, including through restoration of lost productivity, given the already degraded state of global marine and freshwater resources then.

A historical note highlighted the sacred role of women in many past traditional societies.

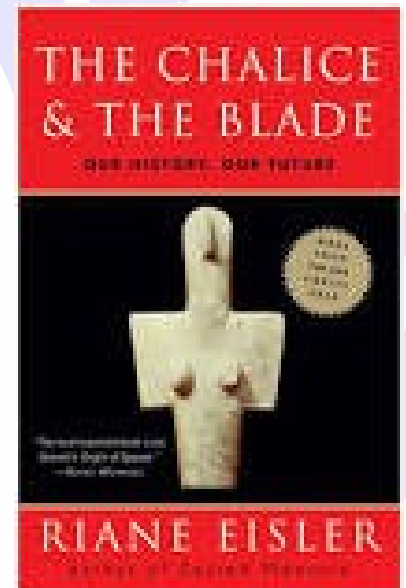
17 detailed case studies were used in the analysis of modern circumstances.



# Harking back to ancestral conditions

The two principal roles of women – the biological and social role of reproduction and holding the family together and the economic role of contributing to income and foodsecurity – are intertwined.

The historical record shows that the female realm was closely associated with nature conservation and sustainable use in several ancient societies where women had specific rights over conservation spaces, e.g. in the Mediterranean and the Pacific, usually supported by religious or mystical beliefs surrounding the Earth Goddess, sacred groves, and the first documented marine protected areas of humanity (Collet, pers.comm.; Eisler, 1988).



# Women invest in community

The intention here is not to romanticise the role of women in conservation.

Many of the systems, which today are interpreted as signifying a conservation ethos (no fishing in certain areas, on certain days, banning of certain types of gear, etc.), may actually have emerged due to social reasons or as mechanisms to reduce social conflict.



Lau women, Fiji (Photo M. Kronen)

# Women associated with restraint

The low level of technology available and the limited demand in earlier times (both for demographic and marketing reasons) would have ensured that resources were more or less sustainably harvested.

Nevertheless, the evidence points clearly towards a **different relationship with nature of those societies** and the association of women with forms of restraint.



Building a traditional fish trap, Riiken, Yap (Photo M. Kronen)

# Case studies

- 2 from Spain (Canary Islands – Gloria Cabrera Socorro, Galicia – Begoña Marugán Pintos)
- 1 from France (Brittany – Katia Frangoudes)
- 1 from rural southern Nigeria (Stella Williams et al.)
- 1 from Sierra Leone (Patience B. Browne)
- 1 from Lake Victoria (Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda – Modesta Medard, Kim Geheb)
- 2 from Brazil (Alpina Begossi, Maria A. Gasalla)
- 1 from Mexico (Margarita Velazquez)
- 1 from Canada (Newfoundland, Labrador – Brenda Grzetic)
- 2 from Pacific islands (Tonga, Fiji - Mecki Kronen, Aliti Vunisea)
- Coastal fisheries Asia (Chandrika Sharma)
- Mekong Region (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Vietnam – Kathleen I. Matics)

# What modern patterns did we find? (1)

Women's labour (and role as **entrepreneurs** and **carriers of local culture**) tends to

- be **unrecognised**, often unpaid, losing social status, thus clouding the economic signals of increasing resource rarefaction – act as cross-subsidy.
- **lose its embeddedness** in traditional belief systems of giving back to nature and exercise restraint, as these cultural norms are being progressively eroded or lost altogether.



Fisherwomen from Valencia, F. Sorolla



## What modern patterns did we find? (2)

**Where social recognition is achieved** through e.g. enforcement of modern equal opportunity legislation – especially when combined with access to formal education and training - women **regain capabilities for enhanced social organisation and leadership**, e.g. mariscadoras, Galicia.

This can lead to significant contributions to the restoration of natural resources.



More recently:  
Leader of women's group in fisheries, Morocco,  
at Slow Fish Genoa, Italy, May 2019

# >15 years on, is it any better?

**SDG 5** focuses on gender equity and equitability

**SDG 14.b** demands access of SSF to resources, SSF Guidelines have a specific gender dimension

**SDG 1** aims at ending poverty

**SDG 2** focuses on ending hunger and ensuring healthy food for all

**SDG 4** demands the right to education, ... **other SDGs**

Recognition of the inter-connectedness of the SDG is progress and e.g. girls' education is advancing



**SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT  
GOALS**

Recent publications on women / gender in fisheries and aquaculture echo many of the findings from the 2002 workshop.

Nevertheless, **awareness is increasing** - indication:

Google scholar for “gender in fisheries and aquaculture” generates

- 4,880 entries between 1950 and 2000
- 16,600 between 2001 and 2019
- **14,000 since 2015 (adoption of the SDGs).**



## Some more facts



### FAO Report State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2018:

**40.3 million people** – about 85% men in in the primary (fish production) sector, vast majority SSF.

**Unaccounted** – no stats available about women in fisheries (pre-, harvesting, postharvest sector – overall perhaps 50:50 according to sample study).

**Downward trend** – Employment is shrinking in North America and Europe with pro-industrial policies

**86% motorised fishing vessels <12m** – total 2.8 mio.

**2% motorised fishing vessels >24m**

**2022** – International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (Proclamed at the 72<sup>nd</sup> Session of UNGA)

# How to garner research impact? (1)

## Fish and fisheries products are the most highly traded food commodities:

Up to 40% of global production is traded internationally, thus not consumed locally.

**Unaccounted** – no stats available about women in fisheries (pre-, harvesting, postharvest sector – overall perhaps 50:50 according to sample study).

Poor numbers cloud understanding of dynamics in value chains, how international movements of goods, services and people intersect with local production, consumption and food security (in positive or negative ways).



## How to garner research impact? (2)

### **We can blend natural and social science results effectively – scalable results for real people**

Women in Southern Senegal used to cut the roots of mangroves to harvest valuable mangrove oysters.

Getting advice on oyster biology and suggestions on providing suitable surfaces for spat to settle helped setting up simple collectors.

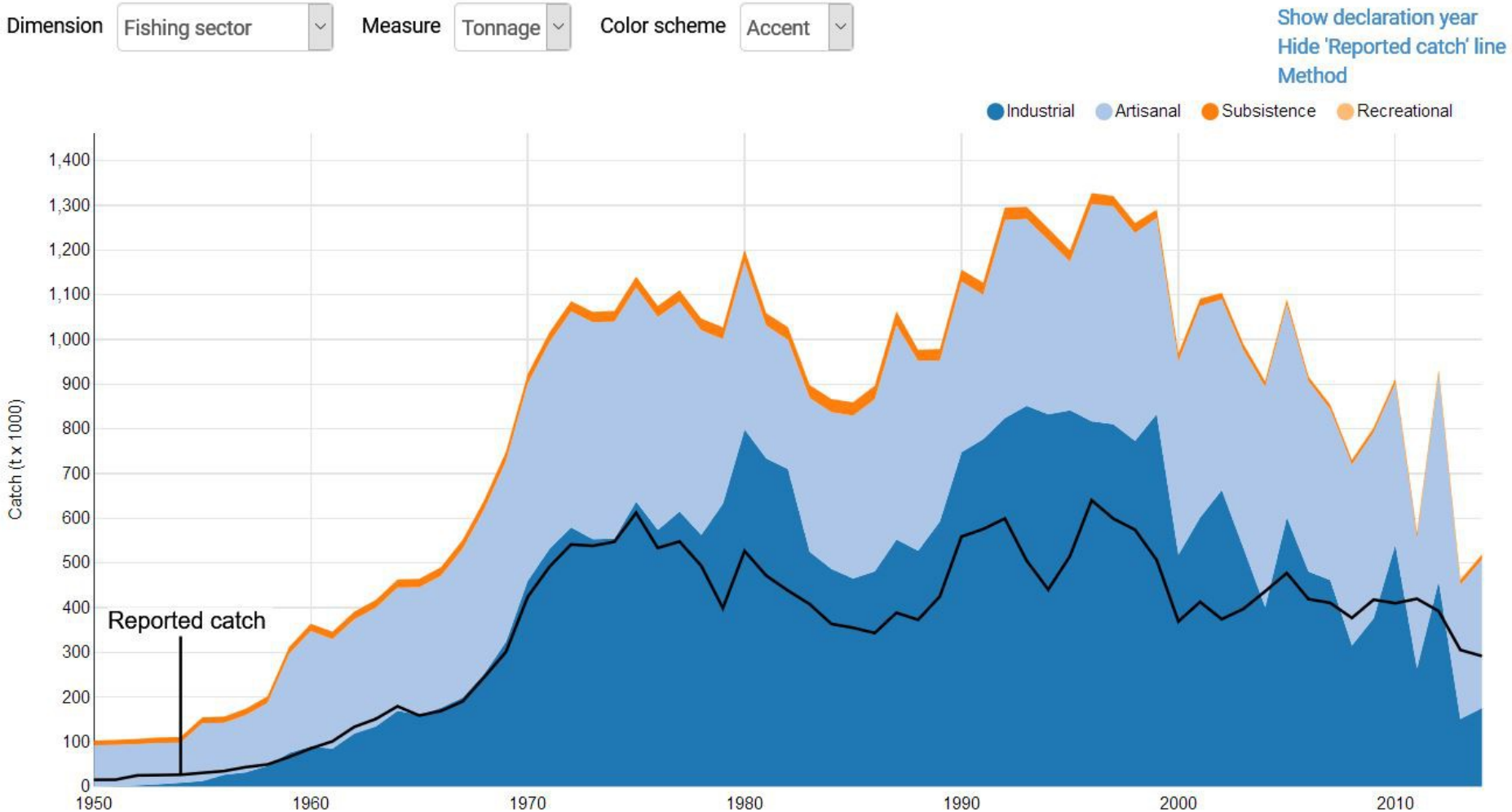
Still hard work, but easier harvesting, higher production, good income for improved social outcomes for all women involved, their families and the entire community – reduced pressure on mangroves.





# ...affects costs and social conditions

## Catch reconstructions by fishery for Senegal by SAU:





# Connecting global science to local

Before the resource decline, women family entrepreneurs commanded high control over certain segments of the value chain.

Their strengths were the marketing of high value fresh fish and the artisanal processing sub-sectors.

Thanks to the revenues from these two activities and alternative savings schemes, women succeeded in establishing themselves in pivotal roles to meet the financing needs of fishermen, upstream and downstream the harvesting activities.

Profits were reinvested and remained in local economies.



# Resource declines affect business conditions of women selectively

Resource rarefaction made upfront finance needs of fishing trips much higher, now effectively beyond financial means of women:

Bigger boats, fuel

Investment of outsiders

No access to credit

Access to catches only via middle-men, not directly from men in the family, and only by grouping means of several women

Example Ms Barry, Boulbinet, Conakry – Guinea

Most profits now accrue outside the local and national economy.



# External investment changes the game

Influx of capital in industrial fishing in direct competition to artisanal operations and investment of rich people from outside traditional fishing in new bigger boats, and more sophisticated equipment challenges the business model of family enterprises.

Women do not have access to affordable credit.

More affluent local clients also raise stakes on freshness and hygiene.

No shock absorbers through social policies (health, new skills ...)

Example Ms Sarr, Hann, Senegal. Women organise!



# Potential for such work in Indian Ocean

At **WIOMSA Conference** we learnt about gendered experiences in **Zanzibar** with promising policy implications by e.g. F. Pike, N.S. Jiddawi, M. de la Torre-Castro, S. Fröcklin et al.

We heard how locally managed protected areas in **Kenya** allowed resource rehabilitation and increased incomes to fishing families compared with locations where local government had distributed subsidies in the form of nets by G. Okemwa et al.

We saw that better blending of nutritional knowledge with work creatively combining local credit groups with diversification away from fisheries in **Mozambique** - as posterred by Teresa Tsotsane et al. - could enhance relevance.

# How do we get from here ...



Courtesy MOZALINK video

**To here?**



WiMS Brown-Bag Lunch Speed Networking, 3 July 2019

# What are we suggesting?

Of course, not to turn every women fish seller into a scientist...

But creating new spaces for collective learning and practice could open

- new perspectives
- new opportunities for women and men
- new, more robust solutions
- new and safer livelihoods
- sustainable lives for all – people and nature.



# Small-scale fisheries academy in Senegal



Men, women from all parts of the country, from all parts of the value chains, ages, helped shape the priorities for 2019



# SSF academy key concepts

## What?

Identify together with ss fishers  
(men and women) their current situation

Where would they like to be?

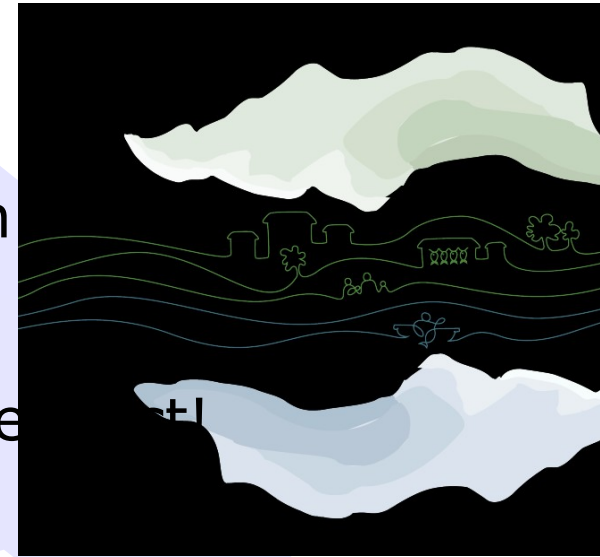
Identify together strengths and weaknesses

## How?

Respond to frequent demand for access to research results  
relevant to their livelihoods and recognise local  
knowledge – blending science and practice

Use and test co-learning methods accounting for their  
living and working conditions (visual, local language,...) -  
driving social change for the better

What type of collective action can help empowerment and  
propel women and men to achieve their goals and SDG?



# SSF academy how to... (1)

Social empowerment: how to get from where you are to where you want to be



## SSF academy how to... (2)

Social empowerment: who can help me to get there



## SSF academy how to... (3)

Social empowerment:  
making your plan of  
concrete next steps of  
what you want to achieve  
in steps of three months,  
during one year on the  
road to you larger  
ambitions

Support learning and  
doing on this journey



# Guiding principles

## Open platform for co-production of knowledge

Respectful multi-stakeholder platform (celebrate diversity)

Suspend judgement – accept participants as they are

Listen, seek solutions together

Promote local leadership, TRUST

Empower, build capacities

Address immediate needs to  
enable venturing out to more  
ambitious objectives

Create experiential meeting of global SDGs (and SSF  
Guidelines) with local constraints and opportunities.



# Framework for success

## Policy level

Phase out subsidies to industrial fishing in the WTO to overcome the structural disadvantages (economic, social, environmental) particularly for African countries

Use public resources for promoting healthy marine ecosystems that can generate high levels of nutritious food and welfare

Help make IUU fishing unprofitable – promote Blue Commons and Blue Justice

Implement gender equity and equality policies

Education and health care for all

# Framework for success

## What to do as researchers?

Support National SSF Action plans and favourable policies for implementation of SSF Guidelines and SDG14 globally through good science and promoting sustainable practice

Make proactive use of existing global, regional, national db beyond disciplines to add value, feed in your results to enable richer interpretations, focus on enabling robust solutions (dynamic process, not *ad hoc*)

Collaborate internationally to make SSF viable futures of wild food production from the ocean, including by enriching and expanding the SSF Academy pilot phase

Strengthen international scientific cooperation in support of the SDGs – promote WiMS, participate!

**Some practice starts right here**







**Thanks for your  
attention**

**-  
open to  
cooperation**

More info on

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