



Gender as an essential dimension in the small-scale fisheries academy – an initiative towards blue sustainability

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Gender not a token

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 difficult 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 from four continents were used in the analysis of modern circumstances

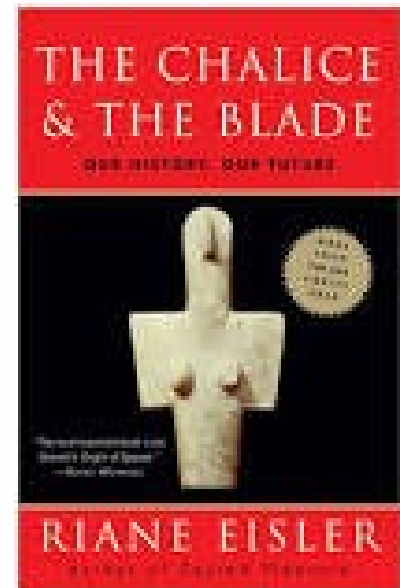




Ancestral conditions

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 food security – 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 marine protected areas of humanity (Collet, *pers. comm.*; Eisler, 1988).





Women associated with restraint

The intention 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 type of gear, etc.), may actually have emerged due to social reasons or as mechanisms to reduce social conflict.

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.



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?

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

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

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**.

This can lead to significant contributions to social well-being and the restoration of natural resources.



~20 years on, is it any better?

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in 2015

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

Recognition of the interconnectedness of the SDG is progress and e.g. girls' education is advancing (somewhat) - though the covid-19 pandemic has obliterated some earlier advances. Violence against women and youth may have increased as a result.

More research on gender dimensions, social justice and hard-won advances pushing back some discrimination of women are raising awareness and show opportunities to reduce violence and conflict within families, communities and across societies.



Documentation has improved

Harper et al. (2020) estimate that 2.1 million ($\pm 86,000$) women account for $\sim 11\%$ ($\pm 4\%$) of participants in primary SSF activities catching roughly 2.9 million ($\pm 835,000$) tonnes/year of marine fish and invertebrates. The landed value of their catch is estimated at USD 5.6 billion (± 1.5 billion).

Williams et al. (2019) found through a survey that gender policies are critical for women in leadership roles in research and admin.





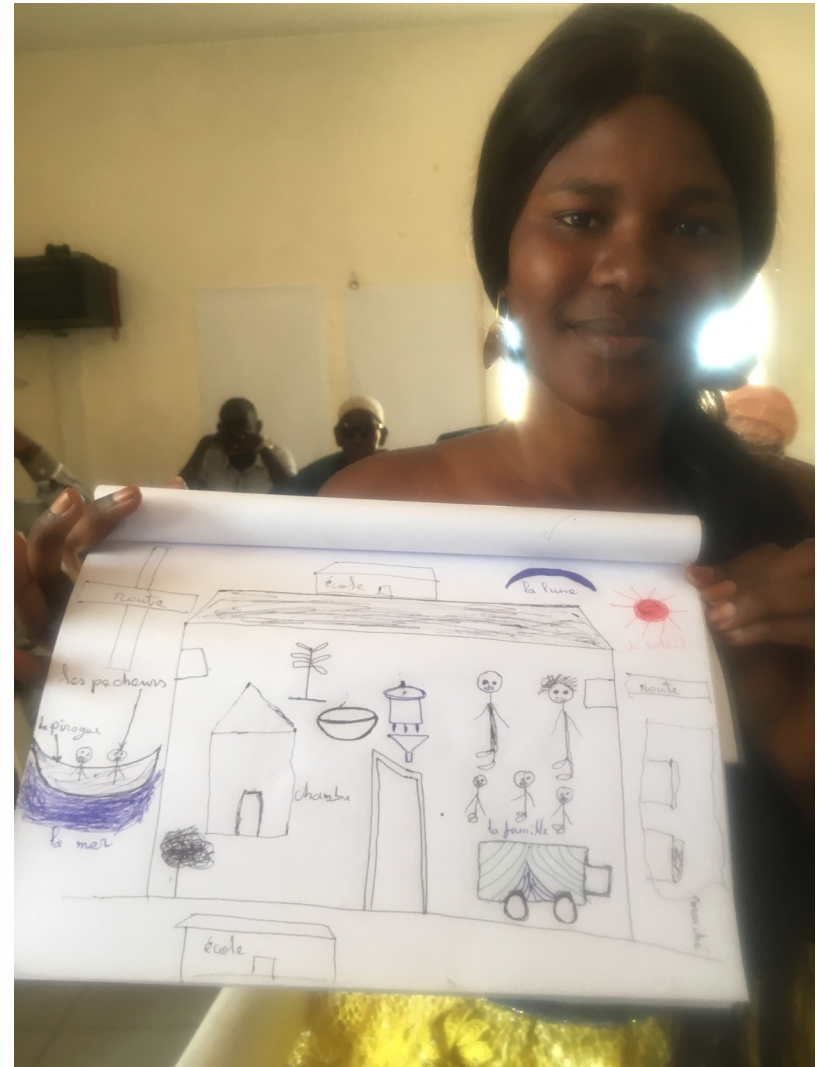
SSF Academy to support change (1)

- Sustainable and prosperous small-scale fisheries depend critically on the ability of all actors along value chains – men and women - to be empowered to express and defend their interests through collective action.
- In the face of multiple pressures – industrial overfishing, lack of easy economic alternatives, poor public social infrastructure, policy preferences for industrial fisheries – investing in the capabilities of people and institutions is key.
- The SSF academy is conceived as a safe multi-actor space for joint learning, co-creation of knowledge and innovation for the recovery, protection and sustainable use of marine and coastal resources and prosperous artisanal fisheries.
- It uses a socio-ecological model inspired by a communication approach supporting social behavioural change (Freire, 1989; Santos, 2007, 2009; Mayoux, n.d.).



SSF Academy to support change (2)

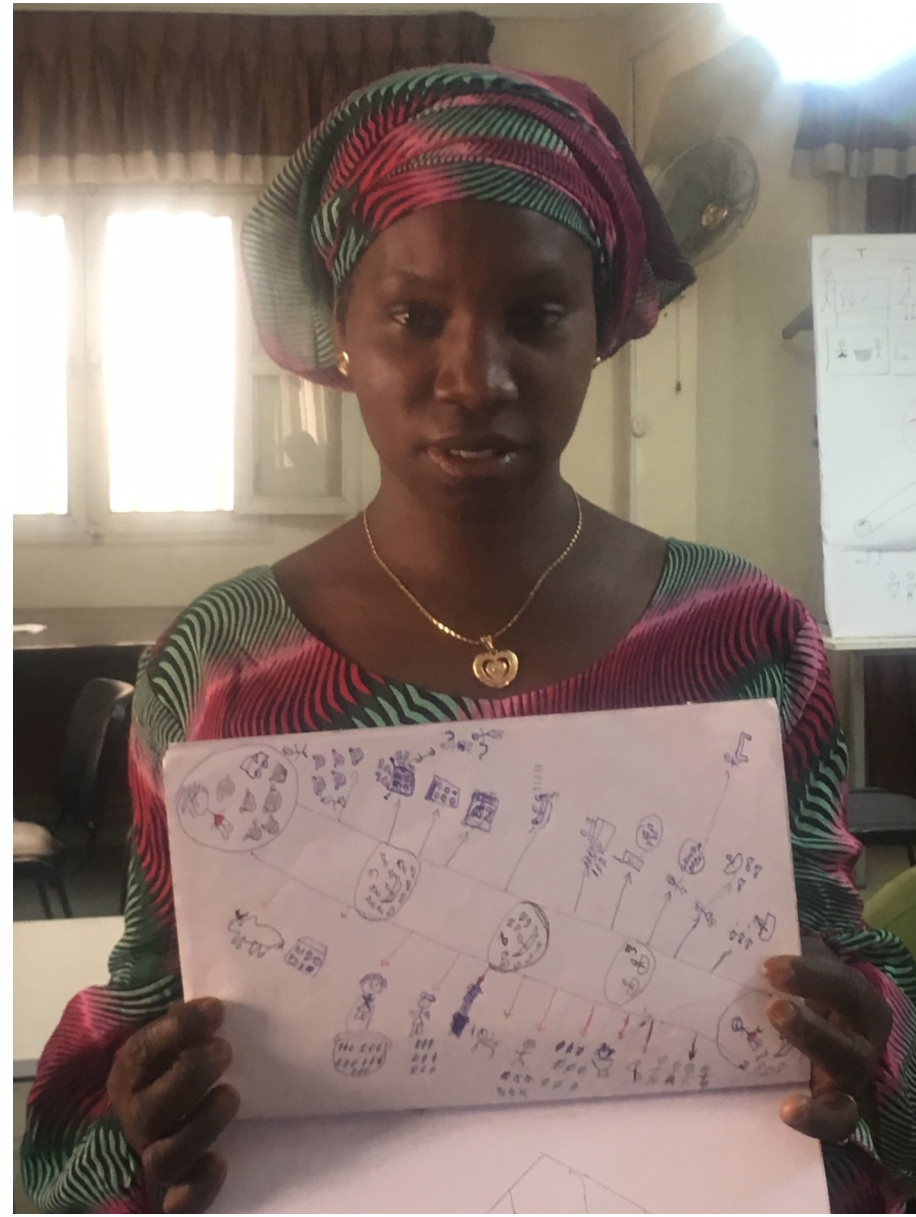
- starting with a vision of what constitutes a good life.
- visioning is important to identify what really matters to academy learners and thus gives a sense of direction to planning and action.
- it also helps to articulate demand, such that learning processes supported by the academy respond to an expressed need, rather than being a proposal from “outside”; that enhances chances of uptake.





SSF Academy to support change (3)

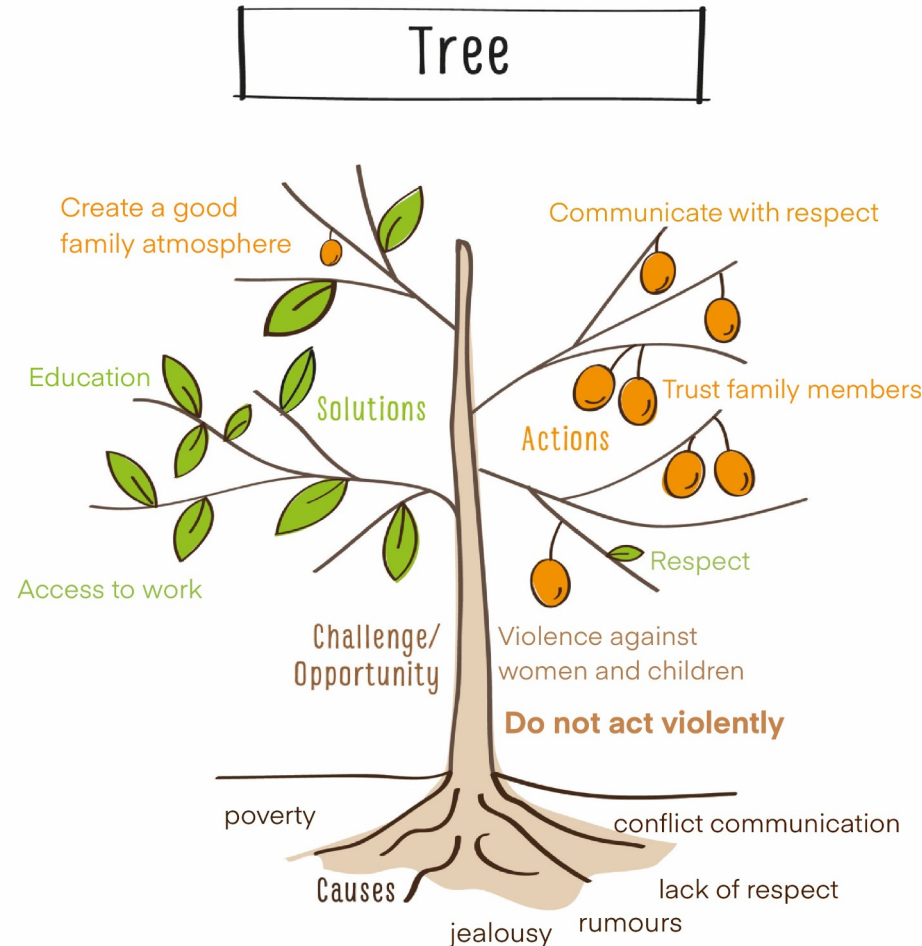
- The active and inclusive learning methods combine visual thinking and participatory leadership so as to enable scaling up positive results from individual to collective levels.
- using images makes the abstract concrete and enables active participation of all in dialogue processes which help focus on fixing quarterly objectives as part of an annual action plan .





SSF Academy to support change (4)

- > Dialogue between different actors in the SSF value chain allows the identification of opportunities for improvement of working conditions, enabling negotiation of terms.
- > The dialogue together with participatory visual exercises brought out important social and gender issues. Earlier considered taboo topics, couples and families were able to identify, discuss and prioritise desired behavioural changes.





SSF Academy to support change (5)



> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DbcjY5PDUuc>



SSF Academy to support change (6)

- Next steps consist of consolidating and deepening facilitation competences of academy learners with the aim of enabling them to become trainers themselves within their own and other communities.
- Diversifying support from resource persons beyond the SSF community as required to improve their ability to cope successfully with the many pressures on their livelihoods.





Outlook

The SSF Academy articulates the Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and action respectful of local populations concerned. It therefore

- celebrates local culture
- promotes active learning giving equal opportunity to all actors and communities in the fisheries value chain
- contributes to the co-production of adapted knowledge and local innovations, incl marine stewardship
- catalyses synergies for tangible changes towards gender and social blue justice
- entails increasing local capabilities for active participation in coastal governance and implementation of the SSF Guidelines
- connects local concerns to global issues and vice-versa with a view to enable robust solutions that work for people and planet
- seeks collaboration initiatives elsewhere





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Thanks for your attention

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