KENYA MARINE AND FISHERIES RESEARCH INSTITUTE
FRESH WATER SYSTEMS

FACT SHEET

ASSESSMENT OF GENDER ROLES AND THEIR IMPACTS IN BLUE ECONOMY ACTIVITIES IN LAKE TURKANA

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INTRODUCTION

- Lake Turkana fisheries are a critical source of food, income, employment, and livelihoods for ASAL communities.
- Benefits from fisheries and blue economy activities remain unevenly distributed, with men dominating fishing, asset ownership, markets, and financial decision-making, while women are concentrated in post-harvest activities.
- Gender inequalities limit access to resources, economic opportunities, and leadership positions, reducing the sector's overall productivity and resilience.
- Promoting gender equality in fisheries enhances household welfare, food security, climate resilience, and sustainable blue economy development.
- Understanding gender dynamics is essential for designing inclusive interventions that ensure equitable participation and benefit-sharing among men, women, and youth.

KEY FINDINGS

- Fisheries Value Chains are Highly Gendered - Men dominate capture fishing, asset ownership, marketing, and technical fisheries operations, while women are concentrated in fish processing and post-harvest activities. Youth mainly participate in transport and support services.
- Asset Ownership Remains Unequal - Men control 86.7% of fisheries assets and own 98.2% of fishing boats, limiting women's participation in higher-value fisheries activities and economic opportunities.
- Access to Finance Favours Men - Most respondents (77.4%) reported that men have primary access to loans and credit facilities, constraining women's ability to invest, expand enterprises, and access larger markets.
- Household Financial Decisions are Male-Dominated - Men control fisheries income in 88.5% of households and make expenditure decisions in 90.3% of households, while women's independent control over fisheries income remains minimal.
- Women Participate but Have Limited Influence in Governance - Although women are increasingly represented in BMU structures, leadership positions and key fisheries management decisions remain largely dominated by men.
- Women Face Greater Livelihood Vulnerability - Women are more likely to rely on low-capital coping strategies such as charcoal and firewood sales, reflecting limited access to productive assets, finance, and alternative livelihood opportunities.

INVESTMENT GAPS

Fisheries Infrastructure

- Limited cold-chain facilities for fish preservation and storage.
- Inadequate fish handling, processing, and storage infrastructure.
- Poor transportation networks linking landing sites to markets.
- Lack of ice plants and well-equipped landing-site facilities.
- High post-harvest losses resulting from inadequate infrastructure.

Women's Economic Empowerment

- Limited ownership and control of productive fisheries assets.

- Poor access to affordable credit and financial services.
- Limited access to improved fish processing and value-addition technologies.
- Weak participation in high-value fisheries markets and trade networks.
- Inadequate business development and entrepreneurship support.

Governance and Leadership

- Low representation of women and youth in leadership positions.
- Limited opportunities for leadership training and capacity development.
- Weak institutional mechanisms for inclusive and gender-responsive governance.
- Limited influence of women and youth in fisheries decision-making processes.
- Inadequate participation in fisheries management and resource governance.

Climate Resilience and Livelihood Diversification

- Overdependence on capture fisheries as the primary source of income.
- Heavy reliance on environmentally unsustainable coping strategies during shocks.
- Limited alternative livelihood and income-generating opportunities.
- Low investment in climate-resilient fisheries and livelihood systems.
- Weak social protection and safety-net mechanisms for vulnerable households.
- High vulnerability to climate variability, declining fish catches, and economic shocks.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Strengthen Women's Access to Productive Assets and Finance - Improve access to boats, fishing gear, processing equipment, storage facilities, savings groups, and affordable financial services.
- Invest in Fisheries Infrastructure - Develop cold-chain systems, ice plants, fish handling facilities, transportation networks, and market infrastructure.
- Promote Inclusive Fisheries Governance - Increase meaningful participation of women and youth within BMU leadership and fisheries management structures.
- Expand Livelihood Diversification - Support aquaculture, fish value addition, entrepreneurship, and climate-smart enterprises.
- Strengthen Skills Development - Provide technical, business, leadership, and entrepreneurship training targeting women and youth.
- Enhance Social Protection and Climate Adaptation - Integrate fisheries-dependent households into food security, social protection, and climate resilience programmes.

CONCLUSION

The Lake Turkana fisheries sector remains a critical contributor to livelihoods, food security, and economic development. However, significant gender disparities persist in labour participation, ownership of productive assets, access to financial services, governance participation, and household decision-making. Addressing these inequalities is both a social justice imperative and a strategic investment in fisheries productivity, livelihood resilience, food security, and sustainable blue economy development. Empowering women, engaging youth, and strengthening equitable access to fisheries resources will enhance resilience, improve livelihoods, strengthen food security, and contribute to a more inclusive and sustainable blue economy in Lake Turkana.

CAPTURE FISHING	*PROCESSING & PRESERVATION*	*TRANSPORTATION*
		
Men	*Women*	*Men & Youth*
75.4% participation	*56.8% participation*	*Shared logistics role*

Men dominate capture fishing, transportation and wholesale marketing activities, while women play a central role in fish processing, preservation and value addition. Youth contribute primarily through transportation and support services.