

Gender Dynamics and Influence of Patriarchal System in Small-Scale Community Fisheries Management in Nandoni Dam

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ABSTRACT This paper demonstrates the gender dynamics and the influence of the patriarchal system on the community fisheries management of Nandoni dam, Limpopo Province, South Africa. A purposive sampling technique was used to sample participants for the study and a qualitative method/approach of data collection was used to conduct the study. The data was collected through key informant interviews, structured interviews, focus group discussions and observations. Data was analyzed according to themes and by grouping responses in accordance with their relevance to these themes. The findings are that the Nandoni dam community fishery employ both men and women and it is managed by local authorities. Actual fishing roles at the dam are male-structured. Women are involved through fish processing and marketing. The conclusion is that fishing is traditionally understood as a male activity. It would therefore be helpful for programs to build on women's current fishery work, tackling issues directly related to their interests.

INTRODUCTION

The socially constructed positions of men and women in a society arise out of the fact that several cultures and societies assign different roles and responsibilities to men and women on the basis of their gender. Gender in social institutions is one of the fundamental ways people are categorized, whether consciously or unconsciously. Gender shapes the way of doing things and interactions with each other in delicate yet detectable ways. Consequently, gender influences livelihood but, ironically, remains both obvious and regularly ignored.

Small-scale community fisheries employ and accommodate both men and women and they contribute significantly to the livelihoods of people involved in them. Men often do the actual fishing and bring the fresh fish catch to the women for processing, and marketing (Frangoudes and O'doherty 2006). A critical assessment of the task performed by women in community fisheries shows that they perform more tasks than

men [see related study: MacAlister and Partners Ltd. 2001; Halim et al. 2001; Pettersen 2004; Frangoudes and O'doherty 2006; Khader et al. 2005]. Problems in the fisheries, for example, not valuing the work done by women in community fisheries, show the lack of recognition of gender issues in the sector. Thus, Neis et al. (2005) remark that fisheries laws, policies and programmes are gender-blind but not gender-neutral and their effects tend to reinforce the existing social inequalities in the fisheries sector. Furthermore, Acharya et al. (2003) and Ibrahim et al. (2011) citing Balk (1997) explain that in fishing communities, men have the sovereign power, they control the household and the society as a whole while women are ascribed to a comparatively lower hierarchy.

In the 1920s, South Africa introduced policy and legislation to develop a fishing industry and establish a management system. This system was aimed mainly at growing the commercial fisheries sector and as a result these regulations largely neglected the small-scale fisheries sector. During this period, those involved in fishing in the Western Cape were mainly men, whereas in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal few women were involved (Marine Living Resource Act of South Africa [MLRA-SA] 2010). In the Western Cape, women were involved in community fishing but in more recent years, they have been

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marginalized completely (MLRA-SA 2010). Women are however involved in many activities that are integral to the small-scale community-fishing activities such as fetching of firewood to dry fish, mending and repairing nets, monitoring fishing tools, processing and marketing.

Bassey et al. (2012) note that, despite several reforms and policy efforts to develop the South African fisheries sector combined with the Marine Living Resources Act of South Africa (MLRA-SA) 1998 and the formal recognition of the small-scale community fisheries sector, not much was enacted regarding gender issues and/or roles in the small-scale community fisheries sector. The small-scale community fisheries sector is highly gender-segregated in favour of men (Odetein 2002); and therefore requires reorganization along gender lines to improve livelihood amongst the actors. Furthermore, Berkes et al. (2001) and Bassey et al. (2012) remark that the small-scale community fisheries use traditional practices in their activities and processes. Thus, fishing is an important industry along the coast and in inland dams and rivers, but like everywhere else in the world, the sector is gendered. Nandoni dam located in the rural part of the Limpopo Province of South Africa, has a fishing sector and is also situated in a highly patriarchal society owing to the constituted cultural norms (Bassey et al. 2012). This fishery sector has a potential to generate livelihoods for both women and men in the area, but progress is stifled amongst the actors due to its gendered nature. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the gender dynamics and influence of the patriarchal system in the community fisheries management of Nandoni dam. The theoretical framework of this paper is guided by gender theory and the social construction of gender.

Objectives

The following objectives were pursued:

- ♦ To examine how the fisheries sector of Nandoni dam is managed
- ♦ To determine the criteria used to choose the people managing the dam
- ♦ To examine the gender recognition or inclusion in the selection process of the managers
- ♦ To verify the role patriarchy play in the management of the fisheries.

METHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive paper which used a qualitative research method/approach. The paper focused only on primary data which was collected using qualitative instruments. The field study was carried out in three communities around Nandoni Dam. The three communities, namely, Maniini, Budeli and Dididi, were chosen mainly because of their cultural nature (patriarchal structure) and selected using purposive sampling technique. The respondents were drawn from three categories, which are, the community leaders (chiefs), managers of the fisheries and the fishermen and women. The qualitative instruments used to obtain data from the respondents were the key informant interviews, individual structured questionnaire, focus group discussions (FGDs) and observations. Key informant interviews were used to obtain responses from community chiefs, individual structured questionnaires were used to obtain responses from managers of the fisheries sector and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were also conducted to obtain information from different groups of fishermen and women. The following questions were asked:

- ♦ How is the fisheries sector of Nandoni dam managed?
- ♦ What criteria are used to choose the people managing the dam?
- ♦ Is there gender recognition or inclusion in the selection process of the managers?
- ♦ What role does patriarchy play in the management of the dam?

RESULTS

The results indicate that the Nandoni dam community fisheries are managed by the local authorities. The local authorities consist of the community chiefs and their ruling council who join together to form the management. Furthermore, the local authority, as chiefs of the communities, assumes a managerial position, as part of their structural roles through their traditional norms. Other findings reveal that these managers/chiefs are not selected or appointed; rather they become community chiefs on the grounds that they are born into the royal family (ancestral rights). Thus, gender recognition reveals that women are not given the opportunity of chieftaincy in the communities; chieftaincy positions

are structural positions for the men only in the royal family. This structural positioning of men affects the managerial status of the community fisheries and not giving women the same opportunity leads to the women's exclusion from the management sector of the fisheries. The role played by patriarchy in the management of the fisheries is structured from the communities' cultural norms, and as a result, shape the level of women involvement in the community fisheries as a whole.

DISCUSSION

Based on the findings that emerged, the Nandoni dam small-scale community fisheries is managed by the local authorities. The management style is informal and the managers assume the managerial position since they are community chiefs. The community chiefs, the male born in the royal family, qualify to assume the status of a manager of the fisheries sector for the dam. There is substantial evidence indicating that the fisheries sector at the dam is poorly managed due to the fact that the managers are not experienced in handling fisheries matters, because of their lack of qualifications or skills regarding fisheries. None of the managers are trained or hold prior experience in fisheries-related matters, rather, they are managers based on their blood ties to the chieftaincy. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP 2007) observes that poor management practices of the fisheries sector and unsustainable exploitation of the fisheries are some of the problems related to illiteracy, inexperience and lack of training on environmental resource management.

But as a solution to the problems of the poor management of fisheries, experts and scholars in this field have come up with a new approach to community fisheries management that is called 'co-management of community fisheries'. The co-management of community fisheries involves a dynamic partnership using the capacities and interest of the local fishermen and women and the community and is complemented by the state's legislation, enforcement and other forms of assistance for the betterment of people's lives (Berkes et al. 2001). Considering the Nandoni dam fisheries situation, a co-management strategy would be a viable option, to replace the current culturally structured management. Such an arrangement has a potential for success as the

local authority takes charge to manage the fisheries only as an extension of their roles in the community. In other words, due to the absence of proficient management systems, the government or private experts in fisheries offer the local authority the managerial responsibilities. However, the setup of the management based on cultural norms despite such managers lack of experience and skills has necessitated bringing in the resource user (those doing the actual fishing) to provide ideas for a better management. Incorporating the resource users to assist in the management, therefore would seem the ideal and best form of management for the Nandoni community.

Aneel et al. (2013) indicate that fisheries experts in Southern Asia, dealing with management of small-scale fisheries, recognize that the small-scale fishery sector cannot be managed effectively without the cooperation of the resource users. The cooperation of resource users should provide information on what and how decisions should be made. This is what is lacking in the management of the Nandoni dam fisheries sector. Without doubts and in most situations, the sharing of the management tasks amongst the local authorities and the resource users as well as the state may favour one group over another, as it demonstrates the unevenness in power relations commonly found in locally created institutions. This type of management style, however, has to be overlooked, to maintain progress (Elmhirst and Resurreccion 2006). The situation would therefore suggest a scenario where the local authority and the resource users come together to manage the fisheries, because involving community members would ensure social equity despite the situation of gender inequalities being so deeply rooted in the institutional settings of a society (Risman 2004 citing Lorber 1994).

Information obtained from the communities around Nandoni dam indicate that the managers assume the position as chiefs of the communities through their cultural norms. Thus, cultural norms and practices of the Nandoni communities have elevated the royal family to positions of leadership that automatically put the male children in commanding and favourable positions and deprive women of the same opportunity. Notably, a society varies to the extent of the social status of their women and men, but where there is inequality, always, the status of

the unflavoured group and role allocation are usually held in lesser esteem than the status of the favoured group (Risman 2004). Thus, in order to make the fisheries sector beneficial to all actors. Kashorte (2003) explains that the managers of the fisheries sector should be chosen or appointed to manage the fisheries. The failures to appoint managers to manage fisheries, especially the community fisheries sector, will always result in poor fisheries management or perpetuate traditional approaches that might reinforce social inequity or mark gender inequality in fisheries sectors. Thus, the gender discrimination and inequality in the Nandoni dam fisheries management is not only unfair but also leads to an inadequate understanding of how a fishery should be operated and managed. The culturally structured management styles leads to two outcomes, gender inequality (since women are not allowed to be chiefs which would qualify them to manage the fisheries) and social inequity (men who have no royal ties are not allowed to manage the fisheries). This is another fundamental observation from the findings, the aspect of inequality amongst men and the different genders which the fisheries sector of Nandoni dam portray.

With regards to gender recognition and inclusion in the selection process of the managers, findings indicate that not all members of the royal family become community chiefs, only the male children of the royalty become community chief. Women are not given the same opportunity of chieftaincy in the communities. Thus, gender recognition in the selection process of Nandoni dam fisheries management would imply involving women in the fisheries practices or for gender mainstreaming approach. Franceskides (2005) indicates that gender mainstreaming is policy strategy opposing segregating gender issues and is mostly used when one is aiming at women's empowerment because the policy regards their participation as a target to redress gender inequalities. This further implies that the recognition and inclusion of gender in traditionally constituted authorities involves the transformation of such existing practices. Risman (2004) remarks that in almost every society, individuals are "gendered" and stereotyping is socially constructed. Gender construction is so much rooted in institutional settings of a society and the sources of gender differentiation arise from social and institutional practices. The

creation of gender differences is primarily a means to justify inequalities between women and men (Risman 2004). While one would be looking at the situation of the Nandoni dam fisheries management as being patriarchal, it is also evident that the management in its present form lacks the prospect of gender inclusion since the selection process of the management is traditional.

Hence, for development projects to be relevant and sustainable, the recognition and inclusion of gender issues, in mostly environmental resource management and activities is unavoidably crucial (Seniloli et al. 2002). However, this also implies that without an adequate analysis of fisheries gender roles, the livelihoods and the wellbeing of the fisheries actors will continue to fail in achieving the intended outcomes and no reasonable impact will be made even if gender is mainstreamed (Seniloli et al. 2002).

Findings from other parts of the world reveal that women process fish and trade in fish products and men do the actual fishing; this involvement is not deemed enough to involve them in the management of the fisheries. Most gender differences in social positions and workplaces, such as in fisheries, are viewed as products of division of labour between women and men which reinforce gender status and power (Bielby 2000). Given the findings and their implications, proper management of Nandoni dam community fisheries management, requires active involvement of women, with the aim of prompting traditional changes in the fisheries practices, target women's empowerment and reduce gender inequalities in the community fisheries sector. In fisheries management, what is most required is balanced, equitable and sustainable development of the fisheries sector and taking all social groups into account (Woodford-Berger 2004). The lack of recognition and representation of women and other vulnerable groups in the fisheries sector thus creates a platform for poverty amongst the fisheries actors.

The fact that women process and trade the fish products implies that they are an integral part of the fisheries workforce and their contribution is significant and should be acknowledged. So, policies to develop the fisheries should start by addressing the role of women and should not underrate or undervalue them. In small-scale community fisheries management, mainstreaming women would definitely unseat

the longstanding situation of male dominance since the sector is male-oriented (Ibrahim et al. 2011). In reality, gender mainstreaming in the fisheries sector would reflect a feminist heritage in its original form (Woodford-Berger 2004). At the same time, the fishery sector provides a classic case of cooperation or complementarity, a situation where the organization of production systems makes female and male fishing activities interdependent (Schultz 2005). This union is at the same time an economic relationship embedded within a system of cooperation and dependence for benefits. As revealed in the findings, without doubt, community fisheries demonstrate traditional practices in their operations. The Nandoni communities, like other fishery communities, oblige fishermen to pass on their caught fresh fish to the women for processing and marketing. Men, in turn, give the women a percentage of the income earned from the sale of fish. The positioning of men as owners of the fresh fish reinforces the gender order and allows male access to female labour in the transformation of fish to monetary value and the management of income (Britwum 2007). Just trading the fish does not give women control over the realized income; in most cases the amount a woman gets from the income is dependent on the men's discretion and may vary due to the profit accrued from the fish sold.

Under any patriarchal framework, women in society are assigned inferior responsibilities that continually reinforce their statuses as subordinates (Risman 2004). Their roles, such as fish processing, fish smoking and drying, fish vending, fish marketing and other fish-related activities all indicate how they are held in lower esteem. Men's roles include activities which generate more income, such as the actual fishing from the dam and management of the fisheries. As a result they frequently control and undervalue women's efforts in the fisheries, thus continually giving themselves power and higher status in that context. In developing countries, patriarchy dominates the social setting of community fisheries such that no woman is found engaging in the actual fishing (Ibrahim et al. 2011 citing Enomuoh 1995). Similarly, Odetein (2002) indicates that the fisheries sector is a highly gender-segregated sector in favour of men and the role of women in a community fishery is embedded in the culture of their communities through the structuring of their norms for ac-

cessing fisheries resources. Thus, patriarchal systems in community fisheries reinforce and shape behaviours that dissuade women from the actual fishing. In the fisheries sector, what is significant and people see and take into account is who catches the fish. What happens after a fish is caught is not regarded as important because women dominate that area.

The occurrences of gender as a way of structuring social life demands that gender statuses and roles be clearly differentiated (Risman 2004 citing Lorber 1994). If men perform the actual fishing and women carry out the processing and marketing of the fish caught by the men, it therefore means that there is need for a union of an economic relationship which should be seen within a continuous system of cooperation and dependence. This is where women should be allowed to partake in the fisheries management policies. Leaving women's fisheries' roles unattended to, would not only lead to social inequity but also results in gender inequality and subject their benefits from the sector to minimal.

Thus, results of the role patriarchy plays in the management of the dam fisheries are rooted in the cultural beliefs and practices of the communities. These beliefs and practices also shape and structure the level of men and women involvement in the community fisheries. The results also reveal that cultural beliefs and practices are responsible for the exclusion of women from the fisheries management and the non-participation of women in actual fishing. Additionally, women are involved overwhelmingly with other responsibilities, like domestic chores. These activities pose a constraint on their full-time involvement in the dam fisheries and limit their chances of making reasonable benefits compared to the men whose roles are specific to catching fresh from the dam. Men do not perform much of the domestic tasks, thereby giving them enough time and opportunity to attend to their actual fishing roles.

The Nandoni community fishery presents the picture that cultural beliefs, attitudes and practices shape the gender division of labour, in that men take actual fishing as their domain, whereas fish processing and marketing is the women's domain. Risman (2004 citing Lorber 1994) explains that the nature and extent to which gender difference is viewed promotes the social order of gender relations which serves to justify gender inequality and segregation, and putting

of women in positions of predominately lower status. The above findings thus require and demand gender mainstreaming in the dam fisheries. Gender mainstreaming in this regards does not only require that men and women should do the same thing to benefit equally, but that what they do differently should be accorded equal status and value.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the results, the study concluded that, owing to the cultural norms of the Nandoni dam communities, men possess leadership positions and manage fishery. At the same time, fishing has also been traditionally understood as a male activity in the Nandoni dam communities. Therefore, to mobilize women into the actual fishing and management may be difficult since they are largely engaged in both fisheries-related activities and overwhelming domestic chores. So therefore, it would be helpful for programs addressing gender roles in the Nandoni dam fisheries to build on women's current work and address the issues directly related to their interests that will define the possible terms of their involvement that would benefit them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a need to review and restructure the present management of the fisheries sector so that it can incorporate resource users in the management. In doing so, priority should be given to women. There is also a need to promote cooperative fishing in the dam. These cooperatives need to be promoted not just because of socio-economic convenience but also for the fact that they can promote communal bargaining. There is need for small-scale community fisheries policy drafters to ensure that policy adoption, formulation and implementation take the local cultural and gender dynamics into account. This will eventually require a lot of changes, transformation and additional support if the local women and men are to benefit from this sector.

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APPENDIX A

List of Abbreviations/Acronyms

- FGDs—Focus Group Discussions
 MLRA-SA—Marine Living Resources Act of South Africa
 UNEP—United Nations Environment Programme