

# Basic Gender Profile for the Costa Rica Large Pelagic Fishery

## What is a basic gender fishery profile?

The purpose of this document is to provide a brief overview of the gender dynamics in the large pelagic fishery in Costa Rica. The aim is to understand the gender equality regulatory framework and gender equality in practice and expand on information related to needs and barriers that could affect the incorporation of a gender perspective in policy and fisheries management.<sup>1</sup>

## Overview of the large pelagic fishery in Costa Rica

Large pelagic species, such as tuna, mahi mahi, sharks and swordfish, live most of their life in open-ocean surface waters and migrate long distances. In Costa Rica, fishing for large pelagic species is mainly carried out using the drifting longline technique by a national fleet. According to interviews with key informants, this type of fishing is medium-scale and is more artisanal than industrial (UNDP, 2020). The social, economic, and trade dynamics of this fishery are complex and are key in the dynamization of the economies of coastal communities.

The government of Costa Rica, led by the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Oceans, and National



Fishing and Aquaculture Institute developed a National Platform for Sustainable Large Pelagic Fisheries. This platform, facilitated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) through its Green Commodities Programme, was a forum for “dialogue and convergence among public institutions with authority over ocean-based activities and the different sectors involved in catching, processing, and marketing large pelagic fish species from the Costa Rican Pacific” (Large Pelagic Sustainable Fisheries Platform, n.d.). The forum had four key thematic areas – sustainable production and precision fishing, effective public-private management, development and consolidation of responsible markets and consumption, and fishery improvement projects (FIPs). This forum had a wide range of publicly engaged stakeholders that meet regularly in working groups, which ultimately generated a 20-year action plan for the fishery to address root causes that block sustainability of the fishery.

The fishery is in the Costa Rica Large Pelagics – Longline and Greenstick Fishery Improvement Project (FIP), which is publicly available for review on [fisheryprogress.org](http://fisheryprogress.org). According to the website profile of this fishery, one of the expressed goals of the FIP is to “Recognize traditional and local ecosystem knowledge and women’s roles in the research, management and decision-making of the fishery” (Fishery Progress, n.d.).

<sup>1</sup> This gender fishery profile is based on a desk-top review and key interviews from a gender analysis carried out in the Global Marine Commodities (GMC) Project countries and which was published in the [GMC Project Gender Strategy](#). It has been complemented with additional information from a desktop review. Due to the present circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, complementing this data with further interviews and surveys has not been possible.

## Gender equality regulatory framework

### Legal instruments for social, political, and economic equality



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Costa Rica ranks 62 out of 189 countries in the UNDP Gender Inequality Index 2017<sup>2</sup>, and according to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Gender Index 2019<sup>3</sup>, ranks 44th out of 129 countries.

The country has ratified international commitments and agendas that protect human rights, equality, and non-discrimination. Among these are: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted in 1948; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) ratified in 1986; the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women; the Convention of Belém do Pará ratified in 1995; the Declaration and Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995; the American Convention on Human Rights “Pact of San José” adopted in 1970; and the International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions No.100 “Equal Remuneration” ratified in 1960, No. 111 “Discrimination (Employment and Occupation)” ratified in 1962, No.122 “Employment Policy Convention” ratified in 1966, and No.189 “Domestic Workers Convention” ratified in 2014.

Domestically, the Political Constitution of Costa Rica (in its 1999 reform) states that “Every person is equal before the law and no discrimination contrary to human dignity can be practiced” (Political Constitution of Costa

Rica, 1999). The country has made significant progress in promoting the social, political, and economic equality of women, reducing gender gaps, and ensuring a life without violence for women through the creation and reformulation of legal instruments and public policies. According to UN Women (n.d.), 83.3% of legal frameworks that promote, enforce, and monitor gender equality, with a focus on violence against women, are in place in the country. Among these instruments are the National Plan of Development and Public Investment of the Bicentennial 2019 – 2022; the National Policy for Effective Equality between Women and Men in Costa Rica (PIEG by its initials in Spanish) 2018-2030; and the National Policy for the Care and Prevention of Violence against Women of All Ages (2017-2032).

### Legal instruments related to power and participation in decision-making

A key law to promote power and decision-making is the Comprehensive Reform to the Electoral Code (Law 8765), which establishes the political parity of women and men in popular election payrolls, party structures, and training processes. The participation and representation of women in social organisations is strengthened by the Law on the Minimum Percentage of Women, which establishes who should be on the directive boards of associations, trade unions and solidarity associations (Law 8901).

### Legal instruments related to access and control over assets and resources

Costa Rica has established regulations on labour reform. The Law on Labour Procedural Reform (Law 9343 of 2016) establishes the prohibition of discrimination in the workplace by sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, ethnicity, marital status, and other analogous forms of discrimination. The approval of the Remunerated Domestic Labour Law (Law 8726 of 2009) also stands out, as it defines and delimits the concept of domestic workers and improves their working conditions.

The country has also made important progress creating regulations to prevent and punish violence against women. The Law for the Criminalization of

<sup>2</sup> The Gender Inequality Index measures gender inequalities in three important aspects of human development: reproductive health; empowerment; and economic status. Thus, the higher the GII value the more disparities between females and males and the more loss to human development.

<sup>3</sup> The 2019 EM2030 SDG Gender Index includes 51 indicators across 14 of the 17 official Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and covers 129 countries across all regions of the world. The indicators are both those that are gender-specific and those that are not, but nonetheless have a disproportionate effect on girls and women.



Violence against Women (Law 8589 of 2007) constitutes an historic achievement for the protection of women against forms of violence. In 2008, the National System of Attention to and Prevention of Domestic Violence and Violence against Women (Law 8688) was created. This system strengthens the conditions for inter-institutional and intersectoral coordination in monitoring public policies and monitoring the applicability of regulations that protect and recognise violence against women. The Law for the Strengthening of Legal Protection of Girls and Adolescent Women (Law 9406) was approved in 2016.

Women, whether married or unmarried, have the same right as men to own, use and make decisions over their land and non-land assets. However, women have lower access to credit and therefore lower access to land ownership in practice (OECD Development Centre, 2019).

In 2015, the then President of Costa Rica, Luis Guillermo Solís Rivera, made a public commitment to close the gender gap through the support and implementation of a myriad of activities to promote gender equality in the nation. In a recent update by UN Women (n.d.), the country established five public-private partnerships to promote gender equality at the workplace and to strengthen women's entrepreneurship and training.

### *Legal instruments specific to gender equality in fisheries*

There appear to be no legal instruments specific to gender equality in fisheries at this time.

### **Gender equality in practice**

#### *Availability of sex disaggregated data*

To strengthen gender data, the Government of Costa Rica implemented Law No. 9325 in 2015 to start a national measurement of non-remunerated household care work under the provisions of the National Statistics and Census System to provide a comprehensive measurement of all economic activities.

Over half of the indicators in Costa Rica's national databases are sex-disaggregated as of 2019. According to Data 2x (2020) in the Bridging the Gap Report,<sup>4</sup> there is high-level support for gender equality in the country, and most data are available for recent years.

In terms of fisheries, there is a lack of updated statistics and data are not sex disaggregated. This lack of knowledge around the gender breakdown of people in the fishery and the supply chain continues to contribute to the invisibility of women's roles and activities in this sector despite the fact that they play fundamental roles as businesswomen and leaders (UNDP, 2019).

### *Gender roles and the division of labour*



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Around 98% of people aged 12 and over allocate time to perform at least one activity of unpaid domestic work per week in the country. However, the average social time (time that society as a whole spends on a certain activity), as well as the average effective time, shows important gaps, since it is women who dedicate a greater amount of average social time to unpaid domestic work, with 35:49 hours per week, unlike men who spend 13:42 hours per week. In other words, women spend an average of 22 more hours than men a week performing unpaid domestic work (INEC, 2017).

According to employment data from the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC, 2019), 279,263 jobs were registered in the Agriculture, Livestock and Fishing sector in the first quarter of 2019, of which approximately 83% (232,165) were men and 17% (47,098) were women. It was not possible to find data disaggregated by sex for the fishing sector.

<sup>4</sup> Bridging the Gap: Mapping Gender Data Availability in Latin America and the Caribbean traces the availability and quality of data for 93 gender indicators across six key domains: health, education, economic empowerment, political participation, human security, and environment. The study covers five countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.



Harvesting activities are commonly carried out by men. Women play a more significant role in the preparation and commercialization of products (Solórzano et al., 2016). In the longline fishing sector, it is common to find women who become entrepreneurs when they own a boat, in which the husband is the captain and goes out to sea to fish, and the wife administers the business (MAG, MINAE, INCOPESCA & COMEX, 2018).

A study carried out in a Pacific island (Vunisea, 2014) points out that in the tuna longline sector, the direct participation of women varies depending on the nature of the work and type of business operation. There are several types of companies in the harvesting sector: those that have their own vessels and focus on fishing only and those that act as agents for certain contracted vessels. If these companies own a shore-based office, there is direct employment for one to two women as clerical staff. Vessel operations and harvesting are done by men. Another type of fishing company is one in which the company operates a fishing fleet and uses the processing services of another company and exports the processed fish. In the latter type of operation, women also work as office managers and administrators while the fishing operations, engineering and mechanical work predominantly employ men. Shipping agents that facilitate customs clearance, border inspections, and provide other services and provisioning for vessels also employ women in clerical type positions.

The Global Marine Commodities (GMC) Gender Strategy (2019) learned from key informants that women do not participate in on-boat fishing activities in the longline fleet. Women participate in the business but not in the harvesting activities. In certain cases, wives or daughters of captains or boat owners perform administrative tasks. Key informants interviewed also indicated that women focus on fish processing activities within the value chain. Some women run their

own family businesses and own boats. There are no disaggregated data but in the seafood restaurant sector there are also women managing their own family businesses.

### *Power and participation in decision-making*

Case studies of fishers' organisations conducted in Barbados, Belize, Costa Rica, Indonesia, and the United Republic of Tanzania (Siar & Kalikoski, 2016) demonstrated that women participate as members and leaders of fishers' organisations, but to a much lesser extent than men. Key informants pointed out that on the Board of Directors of the Fishers and Export Chambers (private sector) there is a degree of women's representation at the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) level in the fishing industry, and there are also women who are part of fishing associations. Despite this participation, women's needs are not considered as such in these bodies.

### *Access and control over assets and resources*

According to a study in fishing communities of Asia, Africa, and Latin America (De Silva, 2011), fishers hold land ownership, which was inherited from generation to generation. They have access and control rights for land and fishing equipment. Financial and credit management activities are the responsibility of women, and they are also engaged in several in-

formal micro financial activities. However, only two percent of women in the country are entrepreneurs (UNDP, 2019). Moreover, they have decision-making power over financial resources with the consent of their husbands.

There is no available information specifically related to access and control of productive assets, resources, and development opportunities and disaggregated by sex within the large pelagic value chain in Costa Rica.



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