CONTRIBUTION 2.5

Developing a policy framework for gender mainstreaming in the fisheries sector – a retrospective

Peter A. Murray

Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) Secretariat

Abstract

Notwithstanding notable developmental policies and investments across the Caribbean Community during the late 1990's to the 2010's, there appears to have been a persistence of gender inequalities and inequities in several areas, including demography, employment, socio-economic status, participation and governance. Boys and men display low educational performance, social deviance, and numerical prevalence in the criminal justice system, while there have been impacts on women as a result of gender-based violence. Additionally, women's labour force participation is not yet commensurate with educational attainment.

Consistent with their international obligations, CRFM Member States have sought to infuse gender equality commitments into their policy frameworks and instruments. These gender priorities are linked in varying degrees to the relevant treaties and the Caribbean Community Common Fisheries Policy (CCCFP).

The Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) has been committed to effectively promoting and supporting the developmental objectives of its Member States. An essential component of the institutional enhancement of the CRFM was seen to be the production of a policy to guide comprehensive Gender Equality Mainstreaming into the plans, programmes, projects, and administration of the fisheries and aquaculture sector. A formal CRFM policy on gender equality in the fisheries sector would have been the framework through which gender analysis and planning could be integrated in a coherent manner at all levels of fisheries sector planning and programming to realise the developmental goals of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas and the Treaty establishing the CRFM. This paper reviews the efforts to bring the fisheries sector up to par with Member States' gender-related obligations and the notable achievements in that regard.

KEYWORDS: Gender, equity, mainstreaming, policy, fisheries

CITATION: Murray, P.A., 2026. Developing a Policy Framework for Gender Mainstreaming in the Fisheries Sector Contribution 2.5, p72-81 *IN* CRFM, 2026. Volume I: Technical Papers. Presented at the CRFM 20th Anniversary Scientific Conference, 28-31 August 2023. CRFM Special Publication No. 37, CRFM Secretariat https://www.crfm.int/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=903

1. INTRODUCTION

Gender equity and equality is the process of being fair to both women and men by creating conditions and opportunities that enable them to enjoy the same status, entitlements, rewards, and resources. Despite stalwart developmental policies and investments across the Caribbean Community during the late 1990's to the 2010's, there appears to be a persistence of gender inequalities and inequities in several areas, including demography, employment, socio-economic status, participation and governance (c.f. Rawwida Baksh and Associates, 2016; International Labour Organisation, 2018). Boys and men display low educational performance, social deviance, and numerical prevalence in the criminal justice system (see also Figueroa, 2007; Bailey, 2014). Evidence points to there being impacts on women as a result of gender-based violence, and that labour force participation is not yet commensurate with educational attainment (International Labour Organisation, 2018).

The Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) is committed to effectively promoting and supporting the developmental objectives of its Member States. An essential component of the institutional enhancement of the CRFM was seen as the production of a policy to guide comprehensive gender equality mainstreaming into the plans, programmes, projects, and administration of the fisheries and aquaculture sector. Consistent with the obligations ratified under the international conventions on gender equality, CRFM Member States have sought to infuse gender equality commitments into their policy frameworks and instruments (see CRFM, 2020b). The compliance (or integration) and accountability to comply with social elements from these international and regional frameworks at the national level varies between CRFM Member States (CRFM 2020a). However, most CRFM Member States, as part of the larger CARICOM (and OECS) regional grouping, have strong political commitment to advancing gender equality. The countries display evidence of progress on implementation at national level, but report challenges in implementing some commitments, such as limited capacity on gender and human and financial resources (ibid.). In regard to integration of gender, youth and decent work considerations in fisheries frameworks and policies, the process has been fairly nascent with differing integration and outcomes available in the national level policies. In addressing the human rights of women, men, boys and girls in the Caribbean Community, gender priorities are linked in varying degrees to various articles of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas and the Treaty establishing the CRFM (see CRFM, 2020c), as well as the Caribbean Community Common Fisheries Policy (CCCFP)

A formal CRFM policy on gender equality in the fisheries sector was perceived as the framework through which gender analysis and planning may be integrated in a coherent manner at all levels of fisheries sector planning and programming to realise the developmental goals of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas and the Treaty establishing the CRFM (see CRFM, 2020a). The policy for gender equality mainstreaming in fisheries would empower the CRFM to build on its existing gender positive characteristics, such as gender equitable employment in national fisheries agencies. The policy would also enable the CRFM, as opportunities permit, to try to rationalise power relations in the fisheries and aquaculture (sub-)sectors, with a focus on a gender-sensitive approach across all aspects of sectoral activity.

Mindful of the current situation/environment regarding gender at the international level (e.g. existing conventions, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Small-scale fisheries (SSF) Guidelines, "renewed" focus on gender by developmental partners, including UN bodies) and the regional situation as reflected in CARICOM Treaties, the CCCFP, and the CRFM Agreement as well as existing approaches to related to gender issues, the need was recognized for improved gender mainstreaming in the fisheries sector. The desire to promote and implement a gender sensitive approach stemmed from the experience of integrating a gender perspective into other social programmes in the region; similar successful practices of several development partners of the CRFM; and global evidence of the efficiency gains that derive

from gender mainstreaming (see World Bank, 2011). The CRFM therefore considered articulating and adopting a gender policy to guide systematic, transparent, and rational engagement of gender issues in the fisheries sector.

This policy would provide a clear directive to infuse gender analysis consistently and methodically into work activities related to the sector; and enable stakeholders to acquire the requisite technical capacity to carry out this function and for gender awareness and commitment to become a pre-requisite in new recruitments into the sector. The policy could also propel gender sensitive administration of fisheries workspaces; conceivably, to explicitly include redistribution of power through engendering equality, inclusivity, and representation, with considerations for hidden power dynamics, where necessary.

2. RATIONALE FOR A GENDER MAINSTREAMING POLICY

A CRFM gender equality policy and policy actions would formalise the mandate for gender mainstreaming in the fisheries governance arrangements/enabling framework as well as the daily fishery and fisheries-related operations, administration, management, and programming at all stakeholder levels. (CRFM, 2018a) The policy would set out the CRFM's gender equality goals and commits the Mechanism to continuous and conscious effort to achieve the expected results, with actions that detail the related, indicative strategies and interventions to operationalise the gender policy for which the CRFM, collectively, would have wished to be held accountable (see table 1, where interestingly some gender equality considerations relate to more than one strategic objective).

In this regard, a gender mainstreaming policy would:

- provide the mandate, resources, systems and training at all levels (Fisherfolk as well as fisheries authorities) for integrating gender into the culture, policies and programmes of the CRFM.
- establish a mechanism for charting progress in gender equality and equity mainstreaming in and among CRFM Member States and affiliated fisheries sector organisations and any other key stakeholders: including but not limited to establishing information systems in relation to gender for analysis, accessing information and monitoring and evaluation (M&E).
- support the capacity of Member States to examine and address gender issues that have a bearing on the growth and development policies of CRFM Member States in the political, social, cultural and economic spheres.
- promote equal participation of men and women, boys and girls in realising the vision of the CCCFP, taking advantage of opportunities. and benefiting from its implementation.
- support values that lead to the attainment of a culture of gendered justice, mutual care, peace and harmony between women, men, boys, and girls within [fisheries-related] households, communities, and institutions in CRFM Member States.
- create awareness (and education) about gender equality and equity among the stakeholders in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

Table 1: Indicative issue and considerations of a gender mainstreaming policy (CRFM, 2018a)

Strategic Objectives at 2018	Pertinent Gender Issues	Gender Equality Considerations
Information on status and trends in fisheries and aquaculture	• Inadequate sex disaggregated data	• Evidence of gender inequality to inform policy
Research and Development	• Gender inequalities in management of fisheries resources, and safeguarding the marine environment as regards livelihoods, climate change, poverty, • Who does what, with which fisheries resources, how does that impact the marine environment, how does that make women and men more or less vulnerable to sector-related environmental hazards?	• Companies often have power to extract fisheries resources even when it infringes on women's and men's rights • Information on the fisheries often not targeted equally at women and men in the relevant socio-economic groups • Women and men often have specific interests, roles, and knowledge needs regarding environmental issues • Women do not hire other women to work in a field that both parties have studied, if the field has traditionally been seen as being male-oriented • Bias towards physical aspects of sustainable development overshadow the activities of women and men and their social development concerns
Sustainable management and use of fisheries resources; Sustainable development of aquaculture	• Slow progress on a rights-based approach to development • Boys, girls, men, and women located in fisheries-related households, firms, and institutions, have varied personal development, consumption, social reproduction, and economic interests in the success of CCCFP implementation • Women and men are clustered into different categories of business ownership • Employment options for young men are shrinking with economic restructuring • Unequal correlation between women's high educational attainment and labour market presence • Many growth strategies in the OECS have assumed women's cheap labour	• Ability/disability, urban/rural residence • Influence of women's social reproduction on their choice of business and their management decisions • Low educational attainment do not affect men's access to better paying jobs • Women's care giving is an input into men's productivity • Women's economic contribution in social reproduction of the labour force is undervalued

Strategic Objectives at 2018	Pertinent Gender Issues	Gender Equality Considerations
Adaptation to climate change and disaster risk management in fisheries	• Gender inequalities in management of natural resources, and safeguarding the marine environment as regards climate change • Who does what, with which natural resources, how does that impact the environment, how does that make women and men more or less vulnerable to environmental hazards? • Women's time spent on reproductive work and community work, levels of income and productivity, and decision making suffer increased constraints post disaster	• Companies often have power to extract resources even when it infringes on women's and men's rights • Information on the environment often not targeted at women at and men in the lower socio-economic groups • Women and men often have specific interests, roles, and knowledge needs regarding environmental issues • Bias towards physical aspects of sustainable development overshadow the activities of women and men and their social development concerns. • Socio-economic situations by age and sex, productive base, organisational capacity, special groups • Changes in percentage female headed households • Changes in percentage of teenage mothers • Women may engage in post disaster reconstruction but are unlikely to have a decision-making role
Capacity building and institutional strengthening	• The persistently male character of workplaces and structures of governance despite the increasing presence and desirability of women in such spaces • Workplace safety, facilities for childcare, balance of work and family responsibilities, adequate housing and safety in overseas postings	• Creation of heterogeneous workplaces and governance structures that cater for and reflect the diverse attributes and needs of women and men at different stages of their life cycle • Performance assessments which conscientiously validate any competencies that women bring to the workplaces and structures of governance

Strategic Objectives at 2018	Pertinent Gender Issues	Gender Equality Considerations
Capacity building and institutional strengthening *(cont'd)*	• Sex stereotypes about how tasks are assigned, and facilities provided • Women and men are clustered into different categories of business ownership • Employment options for young men are shrinking with economic restructuring • Unequal correlation between women's high educational attainment and labour market presence • Many growth strategies have assumed women's cheap labour	• In service management training for women • Influence of women's social reproduction on their choice of business and their management decisions • Low educational attainment do not affect men's access to better paying jobs • Women's care giving is an input into men's productivity • Women's economic contribution in social reproduction of the labour force is often undervalued
[Functional objectives:] Effective collaboration with member states and stakeholders. Efficient and Effective administration	• Tasks and pay do not exploit women's willingness to work • Parity in employment opportunities and work conditions for women and men • Responses to worker's complaints should be sensitive to gender • Women often have to be 'one of the boys' in order to exercise their right to leadership and negotiate in different arenas • Enhance approaches to trade: Gender dimensions of trade remain at the centre of policies and strategies The persistently male character of workplaces and structures of governance despite the increasing presence and desirability of women in such spaces	• Men and women are usually segregated into areas of work with differential pay and leisure time • The programme should be marketed with attention to gender concerns • Worker orientation should address gender issues in the labour market • Women may be concerned about sexual harassment • Diplomacy is constructed around male norms which may not take account of women's multiple roles; are women's insights and opinions valued; are meeting environments women friendly? • Common approaches to trade should include a Gender assessment of possible opportunities and challenges

Strategic Objectives at 2018	Pertinent Gender Issues	Gender Equality Considerations
[Functional objectives:] Effective collaboration with member states and stakeholders. Efficient and Effective administration *(cont'd)*	• Workplace safety, facilities for childcare, balance of work and family responsibilities, adequate housing and safety in overseas postings • Sex stereotypes about how tasks are assigned in quasi-parliamentary settings, and facilities provided	• Reproductive relations can transmit inequality to economic activity, finance, production and trade • Creation of heterogeneous workplaces and governance structures that cater for and reflect the diverse attributes and needs of women and men at different stages of their life cycle • Performance assessments which conscientiously validate any competencies that women bring to the workplaces and structures of governance • In service management training for women

The core principles of such a policy framework would: respect human rights as the gender equality policy, guarding against characterisation of women as victims and men as villains; promote women, men and youth working together for its realisation; adopt special measures to eliminate inequalities that affect women, with attention being paid to gender disparities that affect boys and men; and implement programmes and projects to ensure that women are not excluded. In addition, the commitment to and implementation of the gender policy should be the responsibility of all fisheries and related institutions. Gender equality mainstreaming must be evident in the operations of all aspects of the fisheries sector of the CRFM; and all entities (agencies, divisions and/or departments) of the CRFM fisheries sector must collaborate with each other and with Member States to achieve the objectives of gender equality mainstreaming (CRFM 2018a).

The view was that there was need to advocate for short, medium, and long-terms measures designed to bring about fundamental transformative solutions to gender issues generally in CRFM fisheries; and recognise that gender inequality undermines development and skewed development reinforces gender inequality. (CRFM, 2018a) This would require the re-orientation of cultural values about masculinity and femininity, the expansion of economic opportunities, provision of adequate social services, and the practice of inclusive governance to adjust the gender imbalances that hinder development in/among CRFM Member States' fisheries sector.

3. WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED

Against the backdrop of the perceived need to develop a gender mainstreaming policy and action plan, the CRFM Secretariat drafted a Policy on Gender Equality Mainstreaming in Fisheries & Aquaculture, which was presented to the 30th meeting of the CRFM Executive Committee (CRFM 2018a). The CRFM then considered this policy, with the 12th Meeting of the CRFM Ministerial Council recognizing that the region was well ahead in attaining gender equity and equality in fisheries and aquaculture, with women having equal access to employment and other opportunities as men do. That Ministerial Council Meeting also acknowledged that despite the achievements, there were gender issues that still needed to be addressed and noted that there were peculiar challenges faced by men in the sector. After revisions implicit in the response of the 12th Meeting of the Ministerial Council, the draft policy was revised, and submitted (CRFM, 2018b) to the 32nd Meeting of the Executive Committee for review and finalization. The further revised draft policy document was presented to the 8th Special Meeting of the Ministerial Council (c.f. CRFM, 2018c). The Council was unable to reach a consensus on the need for a separate policy dealing with the identified social objectives, because of the perception that national gender machineries were already placed to promote gender mainstreaming in countries. However, in view of the cross-cutting nature of such objectives, the Ministerial Council, at that 8th meeting, issued the following statement on gender, youth and decent work (CRFM, 2018b): "*The Council accepted that international and national norms regarding issues pertaining to gender, youth, and decent work be adhered to, and be incorporated into all CRFM policies, protocols, programmes, and plans."* This was subsequently reported to and accepted by the 75th Special Meeting of CARICOM's Council of Trade and Economic Development (COTED).

4. DISCUSSION

Pursuant to the 2018 ministerial statement, several activities/actions have been implemented that have placed the CRFM and its Member States in a good "position" regarding gender issues. The Mainstreaming Gender Equality in Fisheries in the Caribbean project was approved by Global Affairs Canada and subsequently implemented by UNDP "with CRFM as a delivery mechanism" (CRFM, 2020i). This project aimed to improve sustainable fisheries for women and girls and other vulnerable populations in the Caribbean, to advance gender issues, decent work and youth involvement in sustainable development of fisheries. The outputs below, produced by the project, address more than one expected result (ibid.):

- Review report on countries' compliance with international instruments in relation to fisheries (CRFM, 2020b)
- Report on determination of appropriate gender-related data/research (CRFM, 2020c)
- Gender Analysis, Strategy and Action Plan on Mainstreaming in Fisheries in the Caribbean for CRFM (CRFM, 2020a), which has been approved by the CRFM Ministerial Council and provides the basis for the way forward in mainstreaming gender issues.
- Report on traditional fishing knowledge & practices (CRFM, 2020h)
- Draft National Gender Action Plans for Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago
- Report on gender-aware capacity development and awareness training (CRFM, 2020f)

- Report on development of regional and national monitoring and evaluation systems to track gender equality, decent work achievements, and youth involvement (CRFM, 2020g)
- M&E tracking tool to assess impact of CRFM gender mainstreaming initiative, currently being populated by a number of States

- Guidance for Gender Equality in Recruiting and Hiring (CRFM, 2020d), which has been incorporated into CRFM's operations manual, and itself enunciates "a policy framework to ensure that CRFM's conservation policies, programmes and activities benefit women and men equally and contribute to gender equity, as part of CRFM's broader commitment to strengthen the social dimensions of its projects, programmes and policy work."

- Proposals for gender sensitive fisheries-related business activities (CRFM, 2020e)

The implementation of this initiative through a methodological and gender-responsive approach, especially through stakeholder engagement, capacity building and facilitation with the Member States' Gender Focal Points (which, at time of writing, all but one of CRFM Member States have nominated), has created a momentum that can contribute to the an enabling environment for foundational work on gender equality, youth empowerment and decent work, which can be leveraged by partners and platforms at all levels to ensure increasing action on gender and social mainstreaming for enhanced results. In retrospect it can be suggested that, with respect to the ability to define and mandate direction, the ministerial statement could be seen to be more impactful and all-encompassing than a more expansive policy document might have been.

In keeping with this, CRFM has made the commitment to strive to partner with global, national and local organizations with greater gender expertise to build capacity to gather, evaluate, and act upon gender information to contribute to constructive environmental solutions while integrating and addressing issues of equity and gender (CRFM, 2020d; also see CRFM, 2021). CRFM's is also committed to make an exerted effort to expand its knowledge and commitment to social and gender equity through sharing of lessons learned in partnership activities with governments, donors, the private sector, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and communities, as criteria for determining which activities to support, and to promote their broader implementation by other actors (ibid.).

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