

FROM MARGINS TO THE CENTER: PROMOTING WOMEN'S BLUE JUSTICE IN TANZANIA'S BLUE ECONOMY

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Tanzania's blue economy holds immense potential for equitable and sustainable development through the responsible use of ocean and aquatic resources along its coastline, inland water bodies, and Exclusive Economic Zone. Women are key contributors to blue economy sectors such as small-scale fisheries, seaweed farming, fish processing, and coastal trade. However, their participation is often informal, undervalued, and constrained by gender-based inequalities in access to resources, finance, training, and decision-making spaces.

This abstract highlights the intersection of gender and blue justice a framework that calls for fairness in the distribution of benefits, protection of rights, and participation of marginalized groups in ocean governance. In Tanzania, women in coastal and fishing communities continue to face unequal power dynamics, insecure tenure, exclusion from co-management systems, and limited influence in policy-making. These injustices perpetuate poverty, limit adaptive capacity to climate change, and undermine the goals of inclusive blue growth.

Tanzania has taken promising steps, including the development of the Blue Economy Policy (2024), implementation of the National Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries (NPoA-SSF), and establishment of women-led structures such as the Tanzania Women Fishworkers Association (TAWFA). These initiatives reflect a growing recognition of women's rights as resource users and leaders. To fully realize blue justice, there is a need to strengthen gender-sensitive legal frameworks, institutionalize gender-responsive budgeting, promote sex-disaggregated data systems, and ensure that women, particularly in rural and island communities have agency in blue economy governance.

Embedding blue justice in Tanzania's blue economy is essential to achieving SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 14 (Life Below Water), while ensuring that ocean prosperity does not come at the expense of gender equity and social inclusion.