

BEYOND NETS AND TRAPS: EXAMINING GENDER ROLES AND WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTIONS IN THE CRAB FISHING COMMUNITY OF MANAPLA, NEGROS OCCIDENTAL, PHILIPPINES

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Crab is one of the most important aquatic products in the Philippines. It ranked third among the exported commodities with an estimated value of USD 91.44 million (DA-BFAR, 2023). As part of the implementation of the Blue Swimming Crab National Management Plan (BSC-NMP) of the country, the blue swimming crab Model Villages were established to serve as a platform for pilot coordinated and science-based interventions. There were two (2) established model villages in the country, one of which is in Barangay Tortosa in Negros Occidental, Philippines. Tortosa is one of the twelve barangays of the municipality of Manapla. It has an estimated population of about 7,008 with three (3) active fisherfolk organizations and one (1) crab-picking plant present in the barangay. The most common source of livelihood is crab fishing using crab gill net (locally known as *kurantay*) and crab pots (*panggal*).

This paper examines the gender division of labor in the crab fishing operation of Tortosa, focusing on the often-overlooked roles of women, particularly the fisher's wife. Qualitative data were gathered through key informant interviews (KII) and a focus group discussion (FGD). For the KII, a crab fisher and a fisher's wife were interviewed. For the FGD, a total of five (5) women participated in the discussion. The results were presented in a validation activity that was attended by various sectors involved in the crab industry.

Results show that the gender division of labor patterns observed in Tortosa demonstrate that while fishing activities are stereotypically associated with men, women, particularly the wives, also play significant roles in crab fisheries. Women assist their husbands by putting bait in crab pots and in the setting and hauling of fishing gears. They prefer not to hire additional crew members or *boso* so that they do not have to share the income with others. While men predominantly engage in fishing and fish marketing activities, women contribute significantly by managing household responsibilities, assisting in fishing operations, mending nets, processing and selling value-added crab products for additional income, and caring for the young children. The dual productive and reproductive roles highlight the vital contributions of women, which remain largely invisible in fisheries discussions.

These multiple burdens leave women with little to no opportunity at all for rest or recreation. Owing to their substantial workload, women express desires for leisure activities, time for rest, and alternative income sources. They also wish to retire from fishing because of its physically demanding and risky nature. They want their children to finish school and land a good job so that they will be able to provide financial support to the family. This paper advocates for the recognition of women's roles in fisheries and calls for gender-responsive policies that support women's welfare and economic empowerment in coastal fishing communities.

