

GENDER AND YOUTH AGENDA WITHIN THE POLICY FRAMEWORK AND REFORM STRATEGY IN FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE IN AFRICA (PFRS)

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In Africa, approximately 200 million people depend on fish as an affordable source of protein and important micro-nutrients (AUC and NEPAD, 2014). The fisheries sector is employing approximately 13 million people (AUC, 2019). Generally, women account for 70% of the labour force in the fisheries sector. The great majority of these women are employed in post-harvest such as processing, sales, distribution and marketing thus making significant contribution to food security, livelihoods and household incomes. In addition, women are also involved in the production and do fish. The involvement increases their economic independence and power in the sector though still requires capacity building to professionalize their roles so that they can face competition from the men. The role of women is often not documented and hence undervalued. This results in lost development opportunities and undermines the contribution of the sector to food and nutrition security, poverty eradication, equitable development and sustainable resource utilization. Africa has the youngest population globally => 400 million young people aged (15 to 35 years). Youth also needs specific attention in its own right. Youth are very often hit by unemployment and limited access to resources and services. Young people represent the future and they need to be fully engaged in shaping that future. They need to be given appropriate skills through education and empowerment.

In terms of intra-regional fish trade, it is estimated that over 70% of the informal cross border traders (ICBT) in the Southern, West and Central Africa are women (Afrika and Ajumbo, 2012; FAO, 2017; OECD, 2017; Chiukira 2021). The second conference of African Ministers of fisheries and aquaculture (CAMFA II) recommended to AU, RECs and MS “to facilitate the participation of Non-State Actors including women and youth in the fisheries and aquaculture decision making processes. The Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) is facilitating the preferential entry and participation for women and youth in gainful and attractive agri-business opportunities. The Policy Framework and Reform Strategy in Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa (PFRS) underscored the need to empower women and youth and develop an advocacy strategy to facilitate their inclusion in fisheries management and decision-making process at national and regional level. AU-IBAR facilitated an establishment of an overarching continental body of women (African Women Fish Processors and Traders Network) to foster coordination between these organizations at national and regional levels for rational support and enhancing their capacity and empowerment. To effect a sustainable positive change, there is a need to focus on long term bottom up process requiring adequate funding is needed. Mechanisms to promote and protect women’s rights to participate in all aspects of fisheries governance and management. Seek to improve access of women to fish and fish markets, particularly through the provision of credit at affordable rates. The PFRS further advocates that strategies ensuring gender and youth considerations should be included in policy, laws and plans and be knowledge based; Effective participation of women and youth in decision-making processes; Adopt value chain approach and Inter-sectoral approaches and partnerships; prevent gender-based violence and eliminate child labour.