

## **GENDER DYNAMICS AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT CHALLENGES IN PERU FRESHWATER FISHERIES**

Natalia Briceno Lagos<sup>1\*</sup>, Luceni Hellebrandt<sup>2</sup>, Kafayat Fakoya<sup>3</sup>, Meryl Williams<sup>4</sup>,  
Nikita Gopal<sup>5</sup>, Caitlin Doughty<sup>6</sup> and Cecile Brugère<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup>EHESS Paris, France

<sup>2</sup>Federal University of Sergipe, Brazil

<sup>3</sup>Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries Section of the Asian Fisheries Society, Malaysia

<sup>4</sup>Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Technology Sydney, Australia

<sup>5</sup>ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology, Kochi, India

<sup>6</sup>Equitable Conservation Advisor at The Nature Conservancy

<sup>7</sup>Global Freshwater Fisheries Equity Advisor at The Nature Conservancy

\*natibriceno@gmail.com

Freshwater fisheries in Peru - particularly in the Amazon Basin and Lake Titicaca—are vital to rural livelihoods, food security, and local economies. Despite women's significant and diverse contributions across the fisheries value chain, from subsistence harvesting to ornamental fish trade and processing, gender inequalities persist and are deeply embedded in social, legal, and cultural structures.

This study presents a gender analysis of Peru's inland fisheries based on an extensive literature review of national census data, academic research, and field reports. Women represent 14% of inland fishers, with participation concentrated in regions such as Loreto, San Martín, and Puno. However, their involvement is often constrained by traditional gender roles, low education levels, limited access to credit, and exclusion from formal decision-making spaces. In Amazonian contexts, cultural beliefs associate fishing with masculinity and restrict women's access to key fishing areas. These challenges are exacerbated by widespread informality, with over 85% of fishers lacking permits and most women excluded from formal representation or social protections.

Yet, documented examples of women's leadership in local management, market engagement, and environmental defense challenge prevailing norms. From organizing fishery cooperatives to leading community responses to ecological crises, women are increasingly asserting roles that reshape the social and political contours of inland fisheries. Their contributions remain largely unrecognized in official policy, which continues to focus on extraction while overlooking pre- and post-harvest labor where women are most active.

This review underscores the importance of recognizing and addressing gendered inequalities in freshwater fisheries and calls for inclusive governance and equitable support systems to empower women in Peru's small-scale fisheries.