

Unpacking the Role of Women in the Pole and Line Tuna Supply Chain in the Maldives

By Peter Wessels



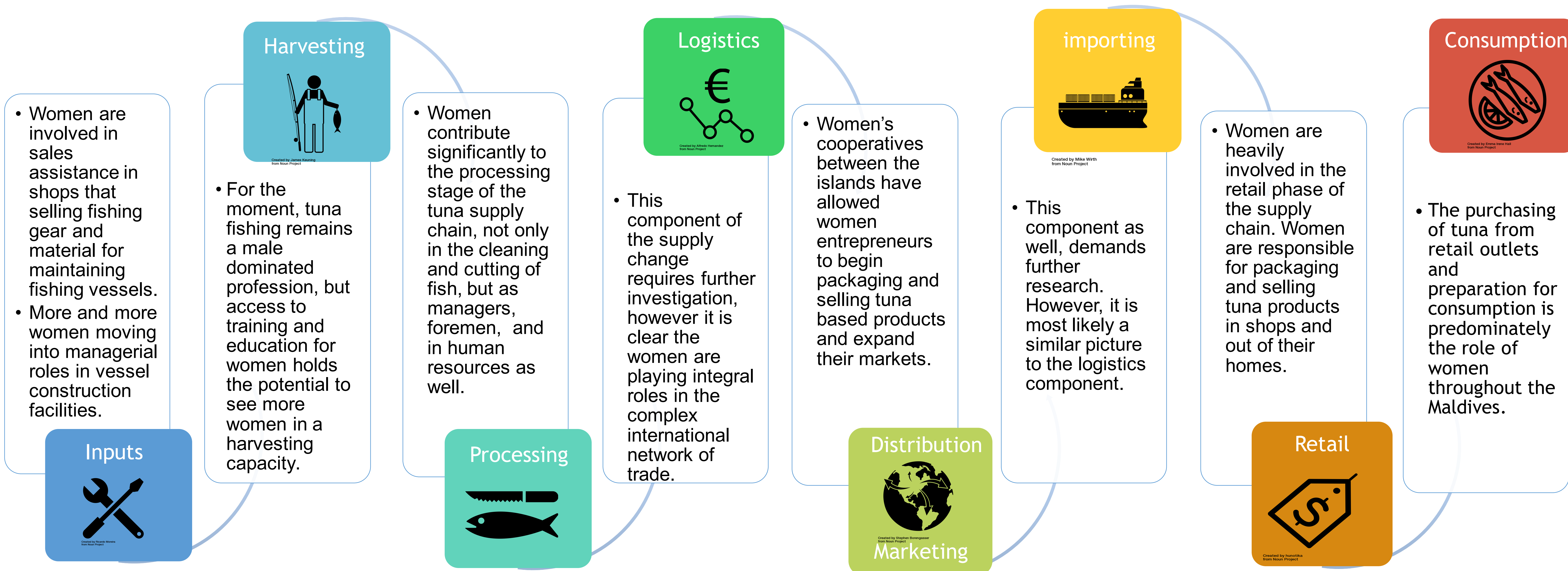
Purpose of Research

Asked what roles women play in the tuna fishery supply chain in the Maldives, most Maldivians will respond that women do not play any role or at most, or at most, that they are responsible for some aspects of post harvest processing targeted for international markets. However, this belief does not capture the full reality of the impact women are having on the tuna supply chain in the Maldives. The purpose of this research is to uncover the hidden roles of women in the one by one, tuna supply chain in the Maldives. This research will be the first undertaking of its kind in the Maldives, and will be vital in assessing how management measures may impact access to assets and capabilities of women in the tuna fisheries in the Maldives.

This study is being conducted as part of my graduate project research for the partial completion of the Masters of Marine Affairs program at Dalhousie University.

International Pole and Line Foundation (IPNLF) in collaboration with Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture (MoFA) and the Marine Research Center (MRC) is deepening their engagement with social issues in tuna fisheries sustainability, and is turning its attention the vital, yet often under-recognized roles women have throughout one-by-one tuna supply chains and in the seafood industry generally. Acknowledging that the data on female workers is very limited, IPNLF has embarked on a programme of research in the Maldives to map the roles women are playing along one-by-one tuna supply chains. We see it is of vital importance to understand and celebrate the qualities and skillsets women can bring to the global seafood industry.

P & L Supply Chain Summary



Challenges and opportunities



Attitudes towards the processing sector by a younger generation of women, less interested in fish processing jobs, and an influx of foreign, female workers, has altered the composition of the female workforce in the processing sector. This trend emphasizes the need for creating more awareness on these types of jobs available in tuna factories.



For women entrepreneurs, selling tuna based products, access to markets and securing capital is still a challenge.

Emerging women's cooperatives provide a diversification of livelihoods for women in the Maldives.



The next generation of Maldivian women are pursuing higher levels of education and more responsibility in their careers. This is putting more and more women into management positions, which is elevating the role of women in the Maldivian workforce. Ultimately this should bring more attention to gender issues in the tuna supply chain.

Conclusions and Next Steps

A great deal of research remains in unpacking the role of women in the pole and line tuna supply chain in the Maldives. However, initial findings have revealed that women provide a substantial contribution throughout the supply chain. Many of the trends in regards to gender in the tuna supply chain have been positive, and there appears to be much that could be learned from this progress. However, challenges still remain and this only serves to emphasize the need for more vigorous national reporting.

The next component of this research will be to develop and test indicators that can represent the gender dimension of these fisheries in a broader program of socio-economic monitoring. The indicators will be grouped into categories relating to: resource use and dependency, wellbeing and drivers of change.

Following the conclusion of this research and analysis, the next step will be to examine how this data can be integrated into fisheries management policy in the Maldives.

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