How has organization benefited women in the Barbados flyingfish fishery?

A look from within

Maria Pena, Patrick McConney, Bertha Simmons and Neetha Selliah
CERMES, University of the West Indies, Barbados
Context & background:
The GIFT

Persistent data and knowledge gaps on gender in SSF

Gender characteristics are poorly documented

*Many assumptions but few real facts*

UWI-CERMES and partners want to better understand gender in SSFs

A Gender in Fisheries Team (GIFT) was formed in 2016

- **Focus:** gender in SSFs
- **Scope:** SSF fisheries value chains & governance arrangements with concentration on livelihoods and governance institutions

Within the SSF Guidelines our focus is on the section *Responsible fisheries and sustainable development*, sub-section 8 on *Gender equality*
Central Fish Processors Association (CFPA)

Established in 2005 to address challenges small-scale processors (vendors) were having with their work area

The only fisheries postharvest association in Barbados

Predominantly female, with female-led since inception
Collective action & Women in Fisherfolk Organizations

Collective action occurs in the fisheries sector to:
- Defend shared interests
- Secure rights and benefits for the industry
- Catch or sell fish

Frequent globally, more so than in Barbados

Women are scarce in fisherfolk organizations globally

The Central Fish Processors Association (CFPA) offers a unique case
- Organization that is primarily female and female-led

GIFT is pleased to be working with the CFPA on research into women’s participation in fisherfolk organizations
This research was inspired by this 2018 FAO publication.
Results:

Feelings about the CFPA

- Personal
- Livelihood
- Functionality

• Pick list of 20 words (all positive)
  • Best describe their feelings about the CFPA
  • Each participant asked to choose 3 words
  • Option to provide additional words
  • 40% of original pick list words chosen
    • Motivating most frequently chosen (21%)
  • 5 additional words added (all negative)
    • dysfunctional, division, partial, disharmonized, frustrated (5% each)
  • Frequency of +ve to –ve words: 74% to 26%
Results: Reasons for joining the CFPA & membership benefits

- 1 reason per individual.
- 83% joined for: representation for better working conditions and defending their rights in the market
- Feeling of being under threat of losing their working spaces.
  - unfair management practices
- A dedicated working area has made their jobs more efficient.
Results:
Perceived successes of the CFPA

• CFPA successes categorized as benefits to the:
  • Group
  • Individual

• Collective benefits include:
  • Improved working conditions
  • Implementation and adherence to food handling standards (31%)
  • Improved profitability & marketability as small business persons
  • Local & international recognition
  • Increased respect, “a little, not much,” from management
  • More informed members (through trainings)

• Personal benefits:
  • Improved self-confidence
  • Rewarding experience
Results: CFPA problems & solutions

- Limited/poor communication (33.3%)
  - President to members
- Inclination to form cliques (26.6%)
  - Bias towards and exclusion of some
  - Some in the “know-how” and others that are the “need-to-show-up-to-know”
  - “We feel shut out”
- Lack of office + storage space (13.3%)
  - Not enough space to store scales and equipment
  - Thought to impact communication issue
- Pettiness, non-functionality, people not caring anymore and work threats (6.6% each)
Results: CFPA problems & solutions

- Improve information exchange and communication! (40%)
- Improve member engagement and sense of belonging (20%)
- Hold meetings to revitalize CFPA (10%)
  - “get it functioning again!”
- Lobby (again) for a space for storage (and meetings) (10%)
- Create a sense of teamwork (10%)
- Foster objectivity among members (10%)
  - Do not allow personal feelings to sabotage collective action

Solutions
Results: Vision for the CFPA

- Being innovative
- Greater impact/recognition in the industry
- Main negotiator for local fisherfolk
- Providing financial and social assistance & benefits for members
- Group working together
- More trust in each other
- Increased membership
- Better communication
- Organized and fully functioning organization

Financial benefits
Recognition for respect
Results: Respect from men in the fisheries industry

- Membership does not bring about respect, it is inherent
- "Men respect women because they know we work hard"
- But... resentment could be mistaken for respect
  - CFPA is recognized as the driving force at the Bridgetown Fisheries Complex
  - CFPA members are told, “they listen to wunna [you all] down there”
  - Seems like respect but could be resentment because “we get things done”
The CFPA functions well with day-to-day problem solving

But overall governance is challenged by what members perceive as *inter alia*:
- top-down decision-making,
- lack of transparency,
- an inclination to form cliques and isolate others, and,
- infrequent top-down communication

Members clearly believe in the value of the CFPA within the postharvest sector of the flyingfish fishery

The underlying frustration regarding these governance issues needs to be addressed and warrants further investigation

A ‘business as usual’ approach could result in further loss of members due to division and frustration

Solutions can be simple, practical and come from within
Results:

Next steps

- Hold additional meetings with more CFPA members
  - To further understand and document perceptions of and attitudes to the organization

- Widen the research to cover aspects of:
  - Individual agency
  - Individual rivalries and contrasting interests
  - Convergences and coincidences
  - Identifying ways in which the CFPA can better benefit livelihoods and domestic life

- Conduct the same research with the CFPA president for comparison

- Validate and share results with all CFPA members

- Work with CFPA members to strengthen the organization