



# Opportunities and constraints of sardine trading for women in Timor-Leste

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RIEL  
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Livelihoods



# Timor-Leste



# Timor-Leste

- Post-conflict, developing country
- 1.2 million people (2015)
- Many challenges
  - Rapid population growth
  - Undernutrition (intergenerational consequences)
  - High poverty
  - Unemployment
  - Education
- Fisheries:
  - Very small-scale
  - Limited data → small pelagic fish important



# This Research

*How can small-scale, small pelagic fisheries be enhanced to deliver and sustain greater nutrition and livelihood benefits to local people?*

**What are the roles of women in Timor-Leste's fisheries?**

**What are the opportunities and constraints for women's involvement in fisheries?**



# This Research



*Timor-Leste's sardine fisheries as a case study...*

# Methods

*Focus group discussions  
and semi-structured  
interviews*

*Household surveys*

*Observations and  
informal conversations*



**18 months fieldwork**

**2 x main field sites  
(urban & rural)**

# Sardine fishery overview



*Fishing...*

# Sardine fishery overview



*Boats return to shore...*

# Sardine fishery overview



*Sardines sold to waiting traders at the beach...*

# Sardine fishery overview



*Transported (sometimes with ice and/or salt) ...*

# Sardine fishery overview

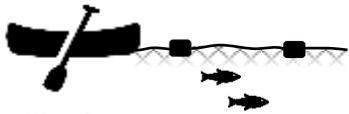


*Sold at road-side stalls or markets... or taken house-to-house.*

# Who is involved...

*What roles do women play?*

## Dili (urban)



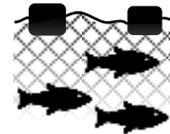
*Fishing*



*Pull up boats*



*Sometimes women assist*



*Remove sardines from nets (large catches)*



*Very rarely see women fish traders*



*Buy and sell sardines*

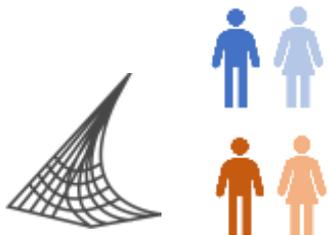


*Women assist in one of the two communities*



*Papalele kiik (small quantity traders)*

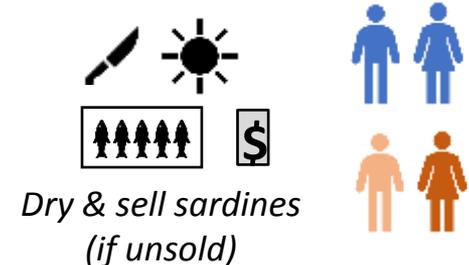
## Atabae (rural)



*Sew / fix nets*



*Cook & care for children etc...*

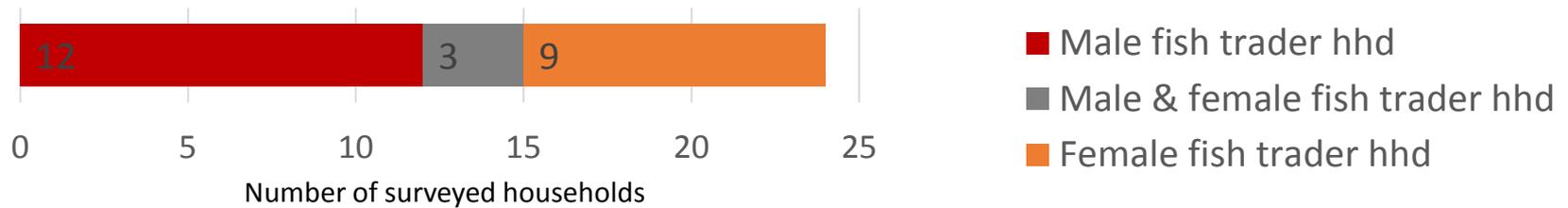


*Dry & sell sardines (if unsold)*

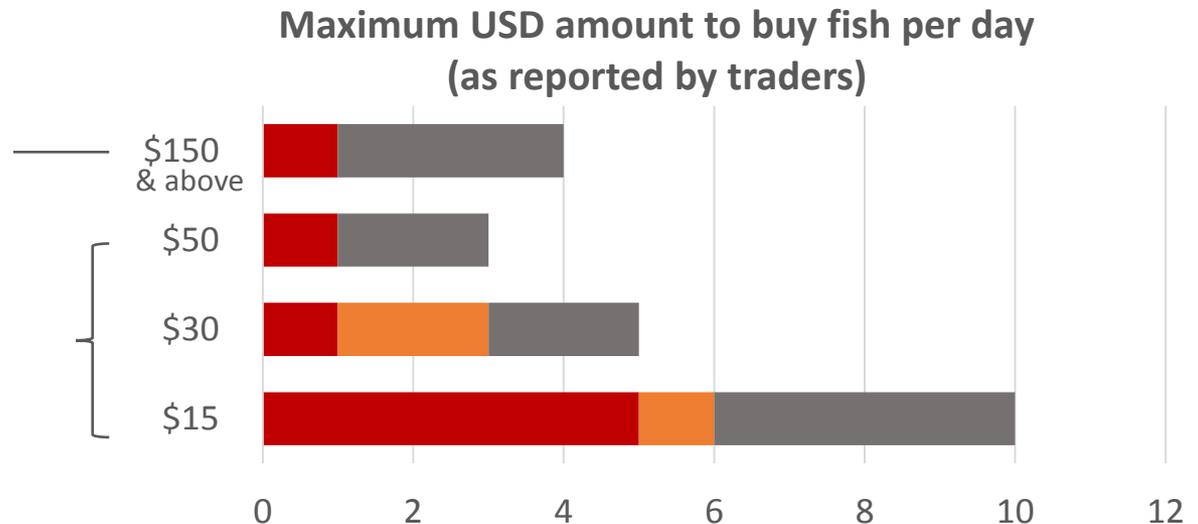
# A closer look at fish trading...

*(In Atabae)*

- 157 households surveyed (~25% of households in 2 neighbouring rural communities)
- 24 surveyed households engaged in fish trading (15.3%)



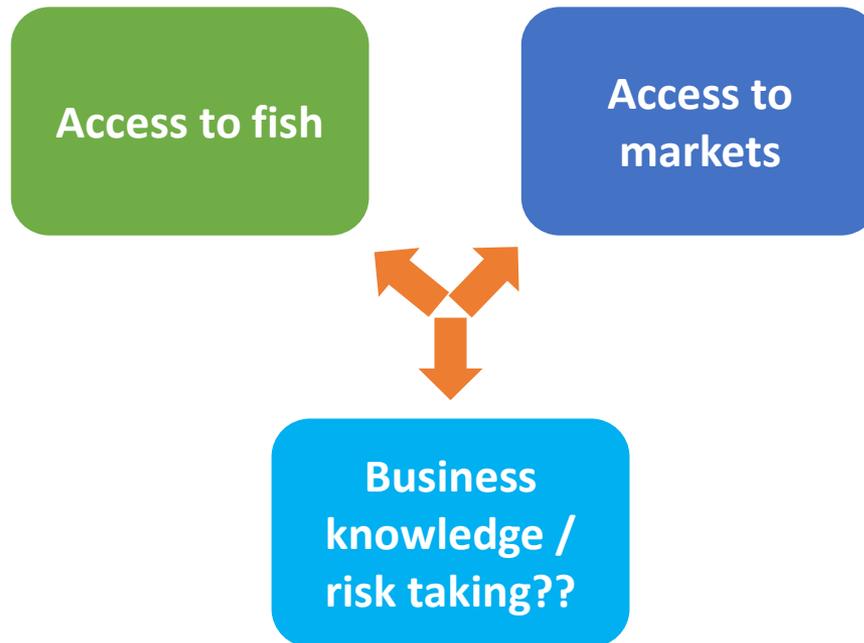
- “Big quantity” traders
- “Small quantity” traders



# Challenges for women?

*Preliminary ideas*

- Large quantities – regular buyer arrangements (Atabae)
- Competitive negotiating environment (Dili)



- Markets (local road-side vs. inland or urban centers)
- Transport (walking vs. motorbike or car)

# Opportunities for women

- Women involved where access to fish + opportunity for road side sales
- Sardines = cash
  - Bought at 20 for \$1
  - Sold at 10 for \$1
- Important as limited opportunities for earning income
- Existing alternative products (*value-added???*)
  - *Ikan saboko* (traditionally grilled fish)
  - Road-side rice & fish restaurants
  - Bottled sardines in oil (NGO-supported)
- Enthusiastic & educated youth
  - But perspective on fisheries as a future?



# Next steps

- Preliminary results and ideas ...
- Analysis of existing data
- Identification of gaps
- Sharing of results and discussion with local communities and government
- Importance of highlighting women's involvement in fisheries in Timor-Leste as a first step...



# Obrigada barak!



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