

THE WOMEN OF THE SEAS

UNPACKING THE ROLE OF WOMEN-LED FISHERIES LOCAL ACTION GROUPS
(FLAGS) IN EMPOWERING FEMALE OYSTER FARMERS
IN LEYTE, LEYTE PHILIPPINES

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RATIONALE & OBJECTIVES

- Women represent around 47% of the fisheries workforce globally ((World Bank, 2012). Their contribution in the sector spans from taking important roles in production, processing, marketing, and distribution.
- These contributions, however, despite being pronounced, are often overlooked and underestimated (Shah & Bukhari, 2019; Harper et al., 2017; Dasig, 2020; Gopal et al., 2020).
- Women continue to face marginalization in terms of their access and control over fisheries resources due to discriminatory gender relations (FAO, 2013).
- This challenge is exacerbated by women's underrepresentation in leadership and decision-making structures globally.
- Women-led associations, cooperatives, etc. are structured around women taking leadership posts and management responsibilities

Objectives of the study are threefold:

1. *Explore the role and contribution of women in oyster farming.*
2. *Identify challenges faced by women in this sector.*
3. *Provide a qualitative analysis into the impacts of women-led FLAGS, in the local example of the Toctoc Baywalk Fisherfolks Association, in Leyte, Leyte, Philippines, in the empowerment of female oyster farmers.*



Findings, Conclusion, and Results



- *Women roles span from production to post-harvest processing and marketing of oysters*
- *Their role expanded to financial and economic governance through the establishment of the associations common pool of fund*
- *Participation of some women members has been constrained by persistence of traditional gender norms in the community, lack and delay of institutional and technological support, and the long production cycle for oysters.*
- *The association has worked as a channel through which female oyster farmers were able to secure material inputs such as bamboo, nets, nylon, drums, and boats from government agencies like BFAR*
- *Cultured a sense of agency among its members. The female oyster farmers' attendance and participation in technical trainings and workshops established them as recognized and active stakeholders of the sector in their community and in the municipality.*
- *To address the challenges continuously experienced by the association, government institutions and other stakeholders should prioritize the timely provision of technological support such as cold storage and processing plant.*
- *Institutional partners should also consider introducing support mechanisms (e.g., childcare services during trainings, flexible meeting schedules) to ensure younger women and mothers are not left behind in empowerment processes.*
- *The association's collective marketing platform should be supported and scaled up with additional linkages to municipal and provincial markets.*