

A person with long dark hair, wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt and a silver watch, is using a hammer to process fish scales on a large, rounded stone mortar. The mortar is placed on a wooden surface. The background shows a wooden lattice structure with sunlight filtering through. To the right, there is a stack of processed fish scales on a table covered with a floral patterned cloth.

Recognizing the Invisible: Legal Advances for Gender Equity in Small-Scale Fisheries

Valentina Inostroza L.
WWF Chile – Environmental Governance & Safeguards
GAF9 – Bangkok, October 2025



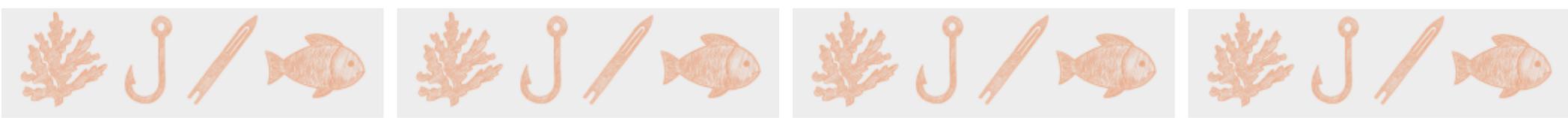
WWF



juntos es posible™

- WWF is a global conservation organization, founded in 1961.
- Mission: Stop environmental degradation, conserve biodiversity, ensure sustainable use of natural resources.
- WWF Chile started in 2002.





SITIOS / SITES



Empedrado

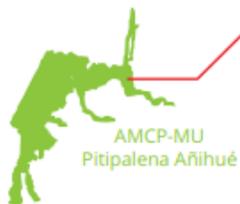
PAISAJE TERRESTRE / LANDSCAPES



Isla Guafo / Guafo Island

Valdivia

Paisajes paraguas y operacionales / Umbrella and operational landscapes

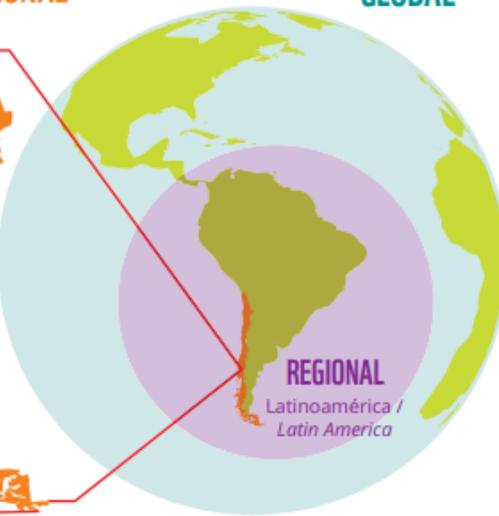


AMCP-MU Pitipalena Añihué

PAISAJE MARINO / SEASCAPES

NACIONAL / NATIONAL

GLOBAL



REGIONAL

Latinoamérica / Latin America

WWF's scope of work



Communities & the *Maritorio*

- Communities and the ocean: ancestral knowledge and practices.
- Livelihoods deeply linked to natural cycles.

(Manzi, 1993; Barbieri, 1997; Castro, 2005; Mandel, 2008; Rothhammer *et al.*, 2010; Seelau & Seelau, 2012; Rivera, 2021; Dillehay *et al.*, 1986; Pino *et al.*, 2008; Zohar *et al.*, 2022).



Women of the sea

- 50% of fisheries workforce are **women**.
(FAO, 2022).
- **Women represent one in four people registered in the Artisanal Fishing Registry (RPA)** → Boat owner, artisanal fisher, diver, gleaner, free diver, or seaweed harvester.



Subpesca, Sernapesca & DOP (2021).

- Until 2021: Invisible in policies and rights.





Women of the sea

Three systemic problems:

- Labor precarity—informality, low protection.
- Institutional invisibility—no categories reflecting what women actually do.
- Exclusion from decision-making—limited voice in how resources and spaces are governed.

Co-designed a pathway: Participatory research, evidence generation, local and national dialogue with ministries, members of Congress, and regional governments.



Gender perspective in fisheries regulatory instruments in Chile

General Law on Fisheries and Aquaculture (1991)



(2) Law which amends the Cove Law to include provisions on Gender Equality in its Administration (No. 21.698/2024)

Cove Law (Law No. 21.027/2017)

(1) Gender Equality Law in the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector approved (Law No. 21.370/2021)





Gender Equality Law in the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector (2021)

- Equal rights & opportunities.
- Gender parity in management bodies.
- Recognition of **related activities**.



Meredith Kohut / WWF US

Gender Equality Law in the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector (2021)

- **Related activities:** *“Those which, while not small-scale fishing activities themselves, **are essential** for small-scale fishing operations”.* (Law No. 21.370 – Art. 2°, 28 bis)



- Creation of a **Registry of Related Activities (RAC)**, managed by the Fisheries Authority: **Women represent 3 in 4 people.**



Subpesca, Sernapesca & DOP (2024).



© Red Nacional Mujeres Pesca Artesanal



Law which amends the Cove Law to include provisions on Gender Equality in its Administration (No. 21.698/2024)

- Incorporated gender equity criteria in the **governance** of artisanal fishing coves.
- Gave women the right to participate formally in the **administration** of the coves.



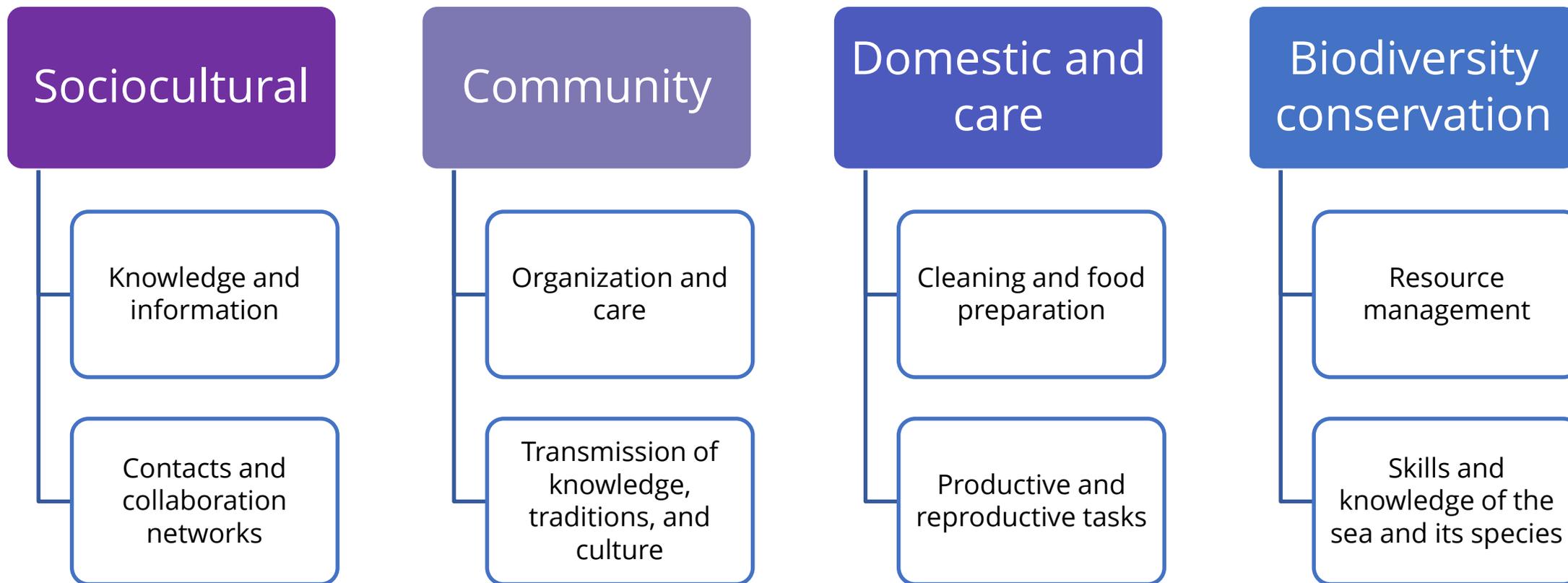
Processing rooms



- After Law 21.370, women accessed regional funds
- Built sanitary-approved processing rooms
- Enabled formal sales to consumers & restaurants
- Pilots replicated across regions
- Many built in backyards → balancing care & work

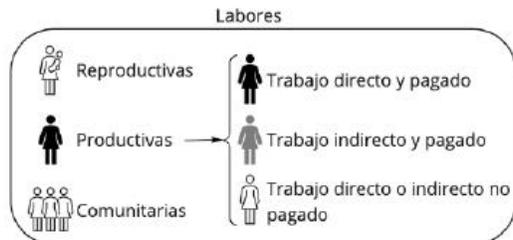
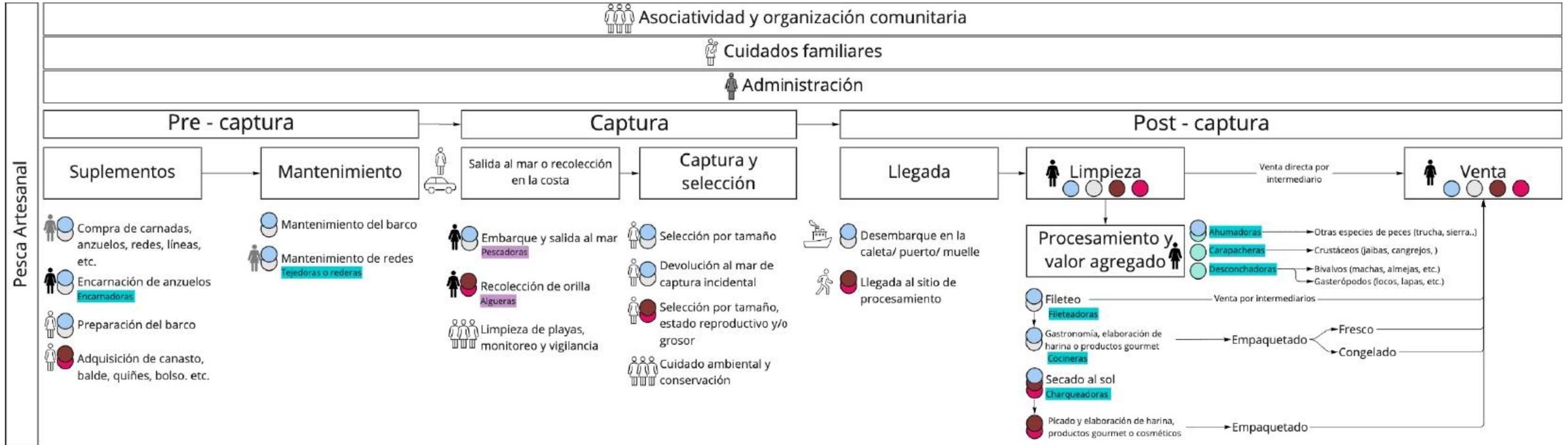


Key research 1: Main roles of women of the sea



Key research 2: Women's role in the aquatic resources value chain in Chile

(WWF, 2022).





Key research 3:

Report “Bodies, trades and inequalities: The reality of the women of the sea”

Spatial, health-related issues and challenges linked to small-scale fisheries and related activities.

(WWF Chile, 2022).

Bodies, Trades and Inequalities: The reality of the women of the sea.

SHELLFISH SHUCKERS

Shucking, carried out mainly by women of the sea, is part of coastal communities' culture. It can be described, in a general way, as the processing of shellfish for its subsequent commercialization and/or consumption. The shuckers are in charge of separating the meat from the hard covering (shell) of species extracted by the women themselves or purchased from third parties, such as limpets, Chilean abalone, mocha clams, clams and mussels.

"In the caleta (fishing community), there should be a place where shellfish and carapace are processed [...] A place for processing and direct sale or export, that is clean and tidy."

Quote from Paula Utrutis - Caleta Tubul - Biobío Region

This activity is carried out mainly in homes or in open-air common spaces, where the women cook the shellfish in large pools over a fire, then extract the interior of the molluscs and sell them. There are also small processing plants where this work is done.

As an activity that involves manual dexterity and changes in temperature and posture, it produces health impacts such as osteoarthritis in the hands or other joints, such as lumbar problems.

It is essential to consider support programs that improve working conditions, but also initiatives to strengthen their products' value chains and sales.

SEAWEED GATHERERS FISHWOMEN NET MENDERS JERRY MAKERS FISH SMOKERS CRUSTACEAN SHELLERS

AQUACULTURIST BAITERS MILLERS SHELLFISH DIVER

BAITERS

Baiters have historically played a fundamental role in preparing the fish lines and nets used in artisanal fishing. Their job is to prepare the lures before the fishers go out, putting the bait on the hooks used in spinels and hand lines. Generally, species such as sardines are used as bait (especially in the emblematic common hake fishery), or others, depending on the fishery.



This activity is carried out around the fishing communities, generally outdoors or in spaces without adequate infrastructure.

"The payment for the work depends on what the boats extract or on their departures, sometimes we are left without any payment for our work."

Quote from Teresa Gómez - Caleta Portales - Valparaíso Region



The activity is carried out in poorly-outfitted spaces, and with hand movements. This leads to deterioration in joint health and leg pain.



It is a priority that this fundamental activity for artisanal fishing be carried out in dignified and adequate conditions. To achieve this, it must be acknowledged as such by fishing community organizations, authorities and the sector in general.



JERKY MAKERS



The Jerky Maker women are heirs to a cultural heritage that consists of cleaning and drying fish that has either been directly caught or purchased. Making fish jerky involves hanging the clean and salt-marinated fish on clotheslines (strings or wires) for two days, to later arrange it on a surface (usually roofs) for approximately 7 more days. Once the drying is complete, it is stored in plastic drums to protect it from humidity, wind and light.

This practice originated in the Andes mountains in what is modern day Peru, Bolivia and Chile, to preserve alpaca and llama meat. The word "jerky" derives from the Quechua word charki (or charqui) which means "dried, salted meat".



The process of hanging hundreds of fish has effects on the body such as lumbago and hip pain.



This activity is carried out in the fishing community site or in the surrounding towns, where communal fences and the roofs of the women's houses are used to dry the fish.



Although progress has been made in recognizing this type of activity, it is urgent to formalize the trade, ensuring regulations for both working conditions (infrastructure and compensation), as well as adequate marketing conditions (food safety and sales).



"At the end of March, during the last days of good weather conditions, we would jerky some sneek (snake mackerel) in the sun and then smoke the fish, all very artisanal. People from other places would pass by to buy from us and would even put in orders. That was a substantial income for our family."

Quote by Ana Romero - Mehuín - Los Ríos Region





Bodies, Trades and Inequalities: *The reality of the women of the sea.*

FISH SMOKERS



The fish-smoking trade is an ancestral technique developed by coastal communities to process and preserve food. This technique consists of exposing the fish to wood smoke. This gives it a characteristic flavor, which can vary depending on the type of wood used, increasing its market value.

Smoking is generally carried out in the homes of women of the sea or in specially-outfitted spaces. Different methods are used, but in general, it is done in barrels or in a cement and brass oven built with a grill system and adapted to arrange the fish filets.



As an activity that involves manual dexterity and temperature changes, it has negative health effects, such as osteoarthritis in the hands or other joints.

Infrastructure and food management support that contribute to the development of the activity by strengthening the means of commercialization and adding value.



"There are granddaughters who are already working, we are already getting them into and having them internalize the smoking and selling field"
Quote from Ana Romero - Caleta Mehuín - Los Ríos Region.

SEAWEED GATHERERS FISHWOMEN NET MENDERS JERKY MAKERS AQUACULTURIST CRUSTACEAN SHELLERS



Bodies, Trades and Inequalities: *The reality of the women of the sea.*

NET MENDERS



The Net Menders' work consists of the constant repair of fishing gear, specifically nets. This activity is fundamental for artisanal fishing, and is commonly carried out in artisanal fishing communities. It requires great dedication and concentration, and the women's hands are the main tool that is used.



In certain cases the activity affects their vision, since it is meticulous and undertaken without proper lighting conditions. As an activity that requires great manual effort, it has negative impacts on the body such as osteoarthritis and lumbago.



The activity generally takes place in the vicinity of the fishing communities, either in open spaces or sheds. In some cases, in smaller fishing communities, it can be done in the yards or terraces of their homes. lumbago.

"I don't like domestic work, I am a woman of the sea. Since I was little I have been bound to the sea. I start work very early because there is always something to do; prepare the nets, mend them if they are torn, go out to sea, fillet the fish, etc. This is a comprehensive job."

Quote from María Eugenia Ogaz - Horcón - Valparaíso Region

Although progress has been made in recognizing this type of activity, it is urgent to formalize the trade, ensuring regulations for both working conditions and access to resources, such as infrastructure and compensations.

SEAWEED GATHERERS FISHWOMEN SHELLFISH DIVERS JERKY MAKERS FISH SMOKERS CRUSTACEAN SHELLERS



FILLETERS



Filleting or cleaning, consists of removing the skin, spines and interiors of captured species, such as fish and cuttlefish. This activity is carried out mainly by women of the sea, either in the vicinity of the fishing communities or in private homes. It should be noted that filleting is essential in the marketing process, since it prepares the food for direct human consumption. It is important to highlight that the compensation for this activity depends, in many cases, on the consumers' willingness to pay, creating a high level of wage precariousness.



Filleting takes place mainly in the vicinity of the fishing communities, ports, markets, fairs or other points of sale. On occasions, when the filleters sell the products directly, they carry out the activity in their homes.

"That they recognize us equally and that we have the same rights as the fishermen, because if the fishermen don't work, we don't either."
(regarding what she expects from Law 21.370)

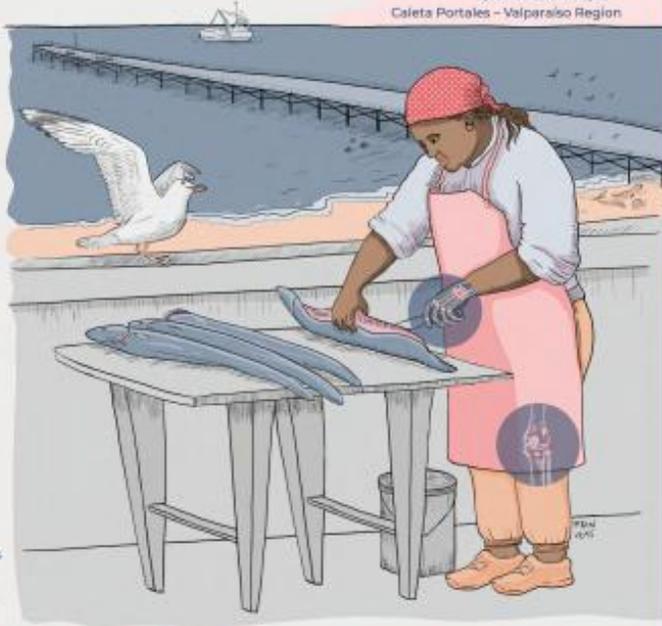
Quote Fabiola Tapia –
Caleta Portales – Valparaíso Region



As this activity is carried out standing up and with repetitive movements, filleting generates bone and joint problems that are concentrated in the knees and hands.



One of the main challenges is to ensure decent working conditions and salaries, so that they do not depend on the will of the people.



SHELLFISH SHUCKERS



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"In the caleta (fishing community), there should be a place where shellfish and carapace are processed [...] A place for processing and direct sale or export, that is clean and tidy."

Quote from Paula Urrutia –
Caleta Tubul – Biobío Region



As an activity that involves manual dexterity and changes in temperature and posture, it produces health impacts such as osteoarthritis in the hands or other joints, such as lumbar problems.



It is essential to consider support programs that improve working conditions, but also initiatives to strengthen their products' value chains and sales.





Bodies, Trades and Inequalities: The reality of the women of the sea.

AQUACULTURISTS



Small-scale women aquaculturists are dedicated to the cultivation and reproduction of aquatic species in their environment (molluscs, algae and, to a lesser extent, the cultivation of fish), for their subsequent harvest and distribution. The technique consists of installing cultivation lines in the sea on an extended rope that is kept afloat by buoys, meshes or "lanterns" are hung, which are the receptacles for the seeds of the species to be grown and harvested.

Currently, women of the sea's organizations lead small-scale aquaculture ventures, where they are the main managers and producers of the marine resources, with experience and knowledge in adaptation to climate change.

Small-scale aquaculture is carried out mainly in the coastal-marine zone. By means of rowboats or motorboats, the men and women workers of the sea navigate, take care of and grow their culture lines in the sea. Working hand in hand with divers to install the culture lines in the water, they accompany the growth of their crops. Another important stage is gathering and/or generating seeds; a process that involves capturing the seeds of hydrobiological resources from the natural environment or from customized spaces, such as laboratories.

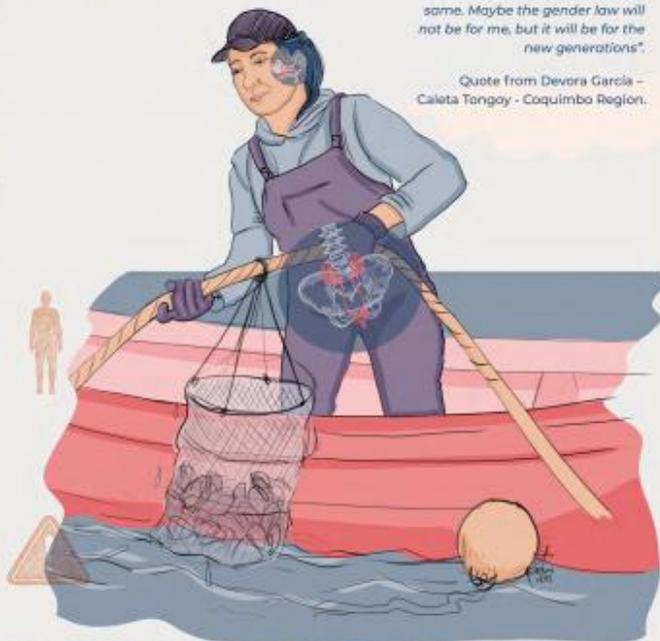


"I love the sea, it's in my veins. I came from a family of fishermen and fisherwomen. My grandmother always inspired me and saw beyond the present. She always fought for the ones that were to come, and I try to do the same. Maybe the gender law will not be for me, but it will be for the new generations".

Quote from Devora Garcia - Caleta Tongoy - Coquimbo Region.

Low temperatures contribute to diseases such as cystitis and earache. Cuts on the hands from using thread (when sewing the "lanterns" or from mollusk shells) are quite frequent.

Strengthening this activity through adaptation to climate change and applying a gender perspective in aquaculture is a challenge that cannot be postponed.



SEAWEED GATHERERS



FISHERWOMEN



NET MENDERS



JERKY MAKERS



FISH SMOKERS



CRUSTACEAN SHELLERS



SHELLFISH SHUCKERS



BAITERS



FILLETTERS



SHELLFISH DIVER



Bodies, Trades and Inequalities: The reality of the women of the sea.

SHELLFISH DIVER



The shellfish diver extracts benthic resources for subsistence or commercialization. The activity requires great physical dexterity and involves the use of technical equipment. In addition, it is a job that is carried out as a team, since many times the fishing trips must be made with a boat and crew.



As an extractive activity, it is carried out at sea in areas where certain resources can be extracted, for example, in Benthic Resource Management and Exploitation Areas (AMERB, for its Spanish acronym).



The activity creates problems associated with pressure changes. Headaches, lower back pain (due to the leads used), joint damage and hearing impairment are some of the reported problems.



Es una actividad desarrollada predominantemente por hombres, por ende, es importante entregar el apoyo y las herramientas necesarias para que las mujeres ejerzan el rubro bajo condiciones óptimas.

"I had been to meetings where they didn't ask my opinion, but now they are required to consider gender equality, and we are more able to do the same activities as men."

Quote from Julieta Nuñez - Caleta San Pedro Concón - Valparaíso Region.



SEAWEED GATHERERS



FISHERWOMEN



NET MENDERS



JERKY MAKERS



FISH SMOKERS



CRUSTACEAN SHELLERS



SHELLFISH SHUCKERS



BAITERS



FILLETTERS



AQUACULTURIST





Bodies, Trades and Inequalities: *The reality of the women of the sea.*

FISHERWOMEN



Fisherwomen must take on this highly physically demanding activity, the nature of which will depend on whether it is carried out in rowboats or boats with an outboard motor. They must also endure the dynamics of fishing on the high seas, where the necessary hygienic services are not available and generally the work periods are very long, which is a limitation for women who are mothers and responsible for taking care of their family.

The lack of equipment or modernization on board the vessels leads to health problems such as lumbago, hernias, as well as pain in the uterus and kidneys due to low temperatures.



The activity takes place entirely at sea, closer to shore when it is carried out on rowboats. In the case of motorized vessels, the distances from shore vary depending on the marine resource being extracted and the autonomy of the boats.



"I started going fishing with my dad when I was about 5 years old and to this day it makes me happy. I feel like I was born for this, although here in the south it is hard to work in the sea. Winter, rain and cold often make the job difficult."

Improve technical conditions to facilitate and safeguard the fisherwomen's work, in addition to ensuring a support system for their children and families.

Quote from Carmen Diaz Vargas - Chonchi - Los Lagos Region



SHELLFISH DIVER



SEAWEED GATHERERS



NET MENDERS



JERKY MAKERS



FISH SMOKERS



CRUSTACEAN SHELLERS



SHELLFISH SHUCKERS



BAITERS



FILLETERS



AQUACULTURIST



Bodies, Trades and Inequalities: *The reality of the women of the sea.*

SEAWEED GATHERERS



Seaweed gathering is an activity that has been documented since pre-Hispanic times. The Chango (1) communities in the north used seaweed to cover their homes, while the Lofenche (2) of the southern region made it a fundamental part of their diet. Currently, seaweed gathering is conducted mainly by women of the sea, who wade in from the shore to pull it out, then dry it and transport it. It should be noted that this activity is often carried out together with the nuclear family, without the necessary technical equipment and under demanding climatic conditions.

- (1) First Nation that has historically inhabited coastal areas between the current Atacama Region and the Coquimbo Region. They have a strong relationship with the sea and the marine ecosystem.
- (2) First Nation that has historically inhabited coastal areas of southern Chile, from the Biobío River to the current Los Lagos Region.

Considering that the activity is often done without adequate technical equipment for the environmental conditions, it causes the women bone and joint pain as a result of exposure to low temperatures, as well as uterus and kidney problems.



The activity takes place on the seashore, often in the intertidal zone. The drying is carried out on the beach and then the seaweed is transferred to their homes or collection points.

"We would move entire families to live for a few days on the shores of the beach and rocks. We would sleep in 'ruccos' (rustic and improvised shelters) and live there until the seaweed harvesting season ended. We would climb the cliffs with our full and heavy sacks. We would let the seaweed dry in the sun and then sell it or exchange it for seeds or other food."

Quote from Karen Cisternas Legua - Los Vilos - Coquimbo Region



SHELLFISH DIVER



FISHERWOMEN



NET MENDERS



JERKY MAKERS



FISH SMOKERS



CRUSTACEAN SHELLERS



SHELLFISH SHUCKERS



BAITERS



FILLETERS



AQUACULTURIST





SEAWEED GATHERERS



Considering that the activity is often done without adequate technical equipment for the environmental conditions, it causes the women bone and joint pain as a result of exposure to low temperatures, as well as uterus and kidney problems.



Although this activity is legally recognized, increasing the level of insurance coverage and social security in general for the gatherers is necessary, allowing them to access basic rights such as having adequate equipment and physical work spaces.



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Quote from Karen Cisternas Legua - Los Vilos - Coquimbo Region



Participation of women in Management Committees

Regulations ensure that **no gender exceeds two-thirds of elected members** of a Fisheries Management Committees, guaranteeing at least one-third representation of women or men.

WWF Chile and the National Organization of Women in Artisanal Fisheries and Related Activities (2022).

INSTANCIAS DE PARTICIPACIÓN
ARTÍCULO 1º D - LEY DE PESCA

Comité de Manejo*

INSTANCIAS DE PARTICIPACIÓN

Función
Asesorar y participar en plan de manejo.

¿Quiénes lo integran?

- 2 a 7 representantes pescadora/es artesanales inscritos en pesquería. (3 representantes sector pesquero industrial)
- 1 representante de planta de procesos del recurso.
- 2 o 3 Autoridades.

Integrantes

- 6 a 11 personas.
- 8 a 13 personas.

- Ni hombres ni mujeres electas podrán superar los 2/3 del total.
- Al menos 1, si el tercio es inferior a 1 cupo.
- Mínima 1/3 hombres y mujeres electas.

Autoridades propenderán a equidad de género en sus actuaciones o concesión de beneficios, en especial al determinar registros que corresponda conformar.

*la ley fija un plazo de dos años para que reglamentos de comités y consejos se modifiquen según nuevas cuotas de género (hasta agosto 2023)

FÓRMULA INTEGRANTES

6 Integrantes
Máx 2/3 → 4
Mín. 1/3 → 2

Pesquerías de recursos bentónicos de vertebrados y algas.

13 Integrantes
Máx 2/3 → 9
Mín. 1/3 → 4

Pesquerías acceso cerrado/declaradas en recuperación y desarrollo incipiente.

CIET-LR WWF



Decalogue to Promote Women's Participation in Fishing Coves

Shared nationally through workshops and infographics.

10 PRINCIPIOS PARA FOMENTAR LA PARTICIPACIÓN Y RECONOCIMIENTO DE LAS MUJERES EN LAS CALETAS

La pandemia y el cambio climático han cambiado nuestras prioridades, nuestra interacción social y nuestra relación con la naturaleza. Pero las trabajadoras de la pesca y acuicultura artesanales necesitan seguir empoderándose. Este decálogo recogió todas sus preocupaciones y se ha convertido en una especie de guía de consejos y procedimientos adecuados que, con el tiempo, buscan propiciar el diálogo y respeto permanente en las caletas.

1. Saluda contra viento y marea

Las caletas son el espacio donde pasamos gran parte de nuestro día, un gesto amable nos ayuda siempre a empezar una buena jornada.

2. Encarna respeto

Interactúa en tu caleta con respeto, sin actos discriminatorios, estereotipos ni malas palabras. Somos personas muy diversas, con diferentes opiniones y también realizamos distintas actividades, pero nadie es menos.

3. Cada gota en el mar cuenta

Motiva, colabora y agradece durante las labores diarias de tu caleta, para mejorar el espacio de trabajo. Promueve y construye redes de confianza con tus compañeros y compañeras, independiente de su labor.

4. Pesca y escucha

Pon atención a lo que tus pares tengan que decirte, como a ti te gustaría que te escucharan. Expresate con respeto, inclusividad, claridad y sin violencia.

5. Súbete a la ola de salud

Que la salud y bienestar sea tu norte: el cuerpo es la principal herramienta para el desarrollo de las actividades en la caleta. Por eso, chequeáte, come bien y propicia trabajos adecuados para quienes tienen distintos impedimentos.

6. Recolecta espacios dignos

Si vives en una zona rural o urbana, mereces condiciones óptimas de trabajo. Promueve la instalación de espacios dignos en tu caleta como baños, camarines, duchas, mudadores, espacio para lactancia y, todo lo que estimes necesario para sentirte mejor.

7. Desconcha más tecnología

Tus capacidades son infinitas y en alta mar, las habilidades digitales pueden facilitar tu vida. Conéctate, conoce herramientas de comunicación y de comercialización. Mantente informada.

8. Filetea el maltrato

Porque juntas nos amamos caleta, el maltrato no tiene lugar en nuestros espacios. Denuncia cualquier hecho que afecte tu integridad mediante los canales que conozcas y si no existen, fomenta la creación de uno para ayudarte a ti y a tus compañeras.

9. Teje redes de descanso

La trabajadora es digna de su salario y también de su descanso. Solicita oportunidades para acceder a capacitaciones, proyectos y recursos. Pero también separa un tiempo para ti, tu familia y para actividades recreativas.

10. Charquea la mala onda

Sin ti, esta caleta no sería lo mismo. No olvides tu valor y tu contribución. Participa y reclama tu lugar en la toma de decisiones y en todos los órganos directivos: tu sabiduría y tu voz son indispensables para mejorar la vida de todos y todas.





Support, strengthening, and exchange of experiences





Lessons learned

- ✔ Evidence is key
- 🤝 Alliances across sectors
- ↻ Flexibility & pragmatism
- 🌱 Strengthening women's organizations





Regional projection

- Chile → 1st country in LAC to **legally recognize related activities.**
- Inspiring a regional agenda on gender, governance, and fisheries.

“Recognizing women of the sea strengthens justice, sustainability, and the blue economy”.





iTHANK YOU!