

## Do Socmon Caribbean Data Tell Us Anything About Gender in Fisheries?

## ¿Los Datos Socmon Caribe Nos Dicen Nada Acerca de Género en la Pesca?

## Ne Données Socmon Caraïbes Nous Disent Quoi que ce Soit sur le Genre dans la Pêche?

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### ABSTRACT

Within the region (and globally) there is a persistent data and knowledge gap on gender in fisheries despite the existence in some countries of national gender action plans (draft or implemented); national fisheries policies (draft or implemented); and the inclusion of gender equality and equity as a guiding principle in FAOs Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries, that all attempt to mainstream gender in these Social Ecological Systems (SES). A number of socio-economic assessments have been implemented at coastal management sites and communities throughout the Caribbean as components of Global Socio-economic Monitoring Initiative for Coastal Management (SocMon) projects implemented by the Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies, at The University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, Barbados. While these assessments have not deliberately investigated gender aspects of regional fisheries, a significant amount of socio-economic data on small-scale and subsistence fisheries have been collected that may be disaggregated along the lines of gender. This poster aims to provide gender insight from selected SocMon fisheries-related assessments and complements applied interdisciplinary research and outreach being conducted by the Gender in Fisheries Team (GIFT) and led by UWI-CERMES to better understand and assist with policy and practice concerning gender in Caribbean SSF.

KEYWORDS: Gender, GIFT, socio-economic assessments, Caribbean

### INTRODUCTION

Gender in fisheries management, conservation, and development has not been given high priority in the Caribbean. Persistent data and knowledge gaps on gender in small-scale fisheries contribute to the overall poorly understood and documented characteristics of these Social-Ecological Systems (SES). In order to improve the understanding and assist with policy and practice concerning gender in Caribbean small-scale fisheries, the Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (CERMES) at the University of the West Indies, Barbados, and partners, has formed a Gender in Fisheries Team (GIFT) to conduct applied interdisciplinary research and outreach. The primary aim of GIFT is to facilitate and support implementation of the Food and Agriculture Organisation's *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication* (SSF Guidelines) in CRFM member states. Within the SSF Guidelines, the specific focus of GIFT is on the section, *Responsible fisheries and sustainable development*, sub-section 8 on *Gender equality*.

The Global Socio-economic Monitoring for Coastal Management (SocMon) initiative (<http://www.socmon.org>) has been actively collecting data and information on human use and dependence on coastal ecosystems since 2003. The regional SocMon node at CERMES has implemented 24 socio-economic assessments across 12 countries in the Caribbean. Although the goals and objectives of these site assessments have not deliberately investigated gender characteristics of regional fisheries, a significant amount of socio-economic data on small-scale and subsistence fisheries have been collected that may be disaggregated along the lines of gender. This paper aims to determine the type of gender insight contained in these SocMon assessments.

### METHODS

#### Site Assessment Selection

SocMon assessments were selected for analysis based on the following criteria:

- i) Goals and objectives for assessment or monitoring were fisheries related or linked to fisheries livelihoods,
- ii) Data were quantitative (only surveys were examined),
- iii) Raw data were easily accessible, and
- iv) Demographic data on primary and secondary occupations or main source of income, indicated involvement in the fishing industry.

Based on these criteria, ten assessments conducted between 2005 and 2013 across nine sites were initially chosen for gender analysis. For each assessment dataset, variables relevant to gender and small-scale fisheries were extracted for analysis.

### RESULTS

This initial analysis could only provide substantially limited SocMon gender insight on small-scale fisheries in SocMon Caribbean study sites. Information on only four of 21 variables of interest could be provided – gender, age, level of education and perceptions of fisheries condition.

## Gender

For the most part, women in the fishing industry are largely invisible. Of the 411 respondents who indicated their involvement through some role within the fishing industry either as a primary or secondary occupation (or main source of income), 98% were male and 2% were female.

## Age

Due to the use of differing age categories for capturing respondent age in the majority of assessments, mean age of men and women engaged in the fishing industry could only be calculated across three sites. Generally, men in fisheries seem to be older with an average age of 45 years ( $n = 309$ , 3 sites) than women who tend to be younger with an average age of 31 ( $n = 2$ , 1 site). Note that the average age for women cannot be assumed to be representative across all SocMon study sites and hence the Caribbean, given the extremely small sample size and the fact that the calculation could only be made for one site.

## Education

Data for this variable across seven sites (eight assessments) indicate that most persons (62%), males and females combined, have at least a primary schooling. Just over a quarter of persons engaged in the fishing industry at these sites have a secondary level of education but both tertiary, and technical and vocational training are rare (5% each). Of the five females represented in these studies, 40% each have a secondary or tertiary level of education with only 20% having received only primary schooling. Again, especially with respect to the data for females, these results cannot be assumed to be representative across all SocMon study sites and by extension, the region, given the small size.

## Perceived Fisheries Condition

Male and female, fishing industry perceptions of present and past fisheries conditions could only be analysed for three SocMon study sites. A Friedman Rank test, was performed for each site's multiple survey data to determine whether there was a significant difference in perceived fisheries (reef and offshore) conditions over a five-year period at each site. Overall comparison across sites (i.e. sub-regional comparison) was not possible since the five-year period of interest varied in each study (2000 to 2005 for Jamaica; 2004 to 2009 for St. Kitts-Nevis; 2010 to 2015 for Dominica). The results of the analysis indicate that for all sites, significant differences in the perceptions of fisheries condition in the past compared to the present were evident. Persons engaged in the fishing industry indicated current declining fisheries at fishing villages in Dominica, the Negril Marine Park in Jamaica, and the Narrows in St. Kitts-Nevis compared to the past ( $p = 0.0027$ ). Conditions were described to be either 'bad' or 'very bad'.

## LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES OF THE ANALYSIS

It was initially anticipated that this preliminary analysis would yield limited insight on gender in small-scale and subsistence fisheries in the region since none of the SocMon studies undertaken specifically focused on this aspect of these social-ecological systems. Although a significant amount of socio-economic data have been collected on regional fisheries through the use of SocMon, the disaggregation of these data along the lines of gender proved difficult or impossible primarily due to the inherent bias in SocMon studies to target male fisheries stakeholders across sites based on assessment objectives, therefore excluding female-specific fisheries roles from examination. While men are blatantly visible, women are virtually invisible in these studies and by extension, the fishing industries in the region. Comparison of site-specific data was additionally challenging due to the following reasons: lack of standardised questions across similar variables used for data collection; the best practice of providing raw data in datasets was not consistently followed by some sites, therefore codes representing aggregated responses rendered analysis impossible; and extreme variation in sample sizes between sites (ranging between 215 to 7 individuals), limited statistical comparison.

SocMon is a powerful and participatory approach for monitoring the socio-economic characteristics of fisheries in order to inform and adapt management, increase adaptive capacity and resilience, and reduce vulnerabilities to certain shocks and impacts. Focused gender research on small-scale and subsistence fisheries in the region can be successfully conducted by using core sets of SocMon variables and standardised questions across sites to develop baselines of gender characteristics and monitor trends over time for improved management and gender equality in fisheries.