

Fostering social inclusion

Situation statement

The realization of the full potential of the Blue Economy requires the effective inclusion of all societal groups, especially women, youth, local communities, and marginalized/underrepresented groups. In relation to economic development, these groups often face limited access to opportunities and public services, inadequate legal standing, poor opportunities to contribute to value addition, low benefits, and a lack of recognition of the unique and valuable role they could play in society.

The case of women is telling. Despite their large contribution to the labor force, women often lack access to natural resources, are given inferior property rights, and receive benefits that are disproportionately low compared to their male counterparts. At the same time, women usually carry out essential household tasks, ensure food security, and are largely responsible for child-rearing. They represent a significant portion of the nonmonetized core economy. In many households, women provide essential income for the family, while in single-headed households they are the sole provider. In various Blue Economy sectors, women are directly and heavily involved. In small-scale and industrial fisheries, women's most prominent role is in post-harvest activities, such as processing and marketing. In West Africa, as much as 80 percent of seafood is marketed by women.²⁴

However, much of women's contribution to fisheries is considered "invisible." Gender discrimination stems from the low value attached to the work carried out by women and is perpetuated in their limited access to credit, processing technology, storage facilities, and training.²⁵

Of equal relevance is the case of youth. Africa faces a huge demographic challenge in the large and increasing percentage of young people under age 30 in its population. In addition, many youth do not wish to pursue rural livelihoods in their home areas and instead travel to rapidly expanding cities. In order to participate in the benefits of the Blue Economy, these youth will need education, training, and job opportunities. Their effective labor force participation, however, could be the engine that drives the Blue Economy of the future.

24 FAO 2012: The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture.

25 <http://www.fao.org/gender/gender-home/gender-programme/gender-fisheries/en/> (accessed 27 November 2015)

Although urbanization is advancing rapidly, Africa is still mainly a continent of small local communities. These communities of fishers, maritime workers, and farmers who rely on inland water resources are often small-scale producers with low technology and limited access to markets. As the Blue Economy grows and transforms the economic landscape, their inclusion will not be automatic, and, in fact, their livelihoods may be displaced by the shift toward more technology-intensive and higher value-added economic activities.

Voluntary and involuntary internal migration and displacement represents an equal cause for concern. Many internal migrant African communities are settled, sometimes illegally, on marginal or highly vulnerable lands. Millions of squatters live under such conditions in waterside slums located in major African coastal cities, while others occupy wetlands along rivers or lakes. These communities are typically extremely poor, and their lack of legal rights prevents them from accessing such basic needs as water and sanitation. Often they find employment in low-paying informal sector activities, yet they could offer a pool of valuable human capital in the Blue Economy. Their vulnerable locations along coasts and rivers, susceptible to severe weather and flooding, also expose them to the potential problem of natural disasters, which raises the need for emergency responses by a variety of public safety institutions.

Finally, it is important to ensure that the development of the Blue Economy fosters the preservation of Africa's vast cultural diversity and rich cultural heritage. Even as the continent is transformed by fast-moving economic development, thousands of indigenous communities continue to maintain their way of life and traditional livelihoods. For many, these livelihoods represent more than income; they are embedded in their very identity. Many are fishers in coastal and riparian locations or farmers adjacent to critical water sources that sustain their production. In recent years, many of these communities have been displaced involuntarily or have lost their livelihoods and social cohesion as a result of land use changes for large-scale commercial production in such sectors as agriculture, energy, and mining. This has led at times to conflict as well as to the loss of cultural traditions, including perpetually relevant, yet consistently undervalued, indigenous knowledge.

Challenges

Although there is increasing diversity in the economic activities of the various Blue Economy sectors, there remains a propensity to exclude and marginalize women as well as underrepresented groups and youth.

It is estimated that women form only 2 percent of the world's official maritime workforce, and the percentage of women's known participation in the African context is even smaller.²⁶

Women are also noted to be the lowest paid even when undertaking work equivalent to that of their male counterparts. Multiple factors undermine the empowerment of women in the Blue Economy. In some cases, women lack equal access to maritime education and training through formal and informal processes that deny them access to specific courses, such as navigation and particularly marine engineering. In other areas, such as the fishing industry, women play an important role in the value chain, but in some countries they are often marginalized in sharing or benefiting from the gains. Smoking/drying and sale of fish are largely undertaken by women, at the artisanal and factory level, yet subsidies, equipment/logistics support, tax relief, training, and financial support in the fishing industry are largely targeted at fishers, vessel owners, and the management of shipping companies, who are predominately men.

Achieving the full benefits of a Blue Economy will be greatly enabled by empowering women to allow them to participate fully in and contribute to their own development and success. A cornerstone of this multifaceted process is the provision of equal access to educational and training opportunities as well as to current and emerging job opportunities. The design of these reforms needs to take into account the role of women as mothers and providers, as well as the role they play in the fabric of African society. Incorporating the untapped talents of women in these and related areas is a major challenge for the Blue Economy.

A similarly large challenge exists with respect to employment opportunities for youth, many of whom are currently unemployed or underemployed. For both specialized and labor-intensive training, it is essential to create new technical and vocational centers or other venues to provide the appropriate courses of study for youth. These educational centers can be related to the Blue Economy, such as providing training for offshore oil and gas workers, courses for technicians in renewable energy development and implementation, or training for fishers.

Diverse underrepresented groups often find themselves outside conventional policymaking, despite having particular interests that would need to be taken into account. Marginalized coastal and riparian communities present special challenges because of their often illegal status in relation to land rights and use. This makes them particularly vulnerable to natural hazards and social

26 Tifuh, Azirh Nicholine. World Maritime University Dissertations, Paper 482 (2014). Women merchant mariners: empowering West African women.

disruption, which incur costs that are usually borne by the State. Incorporating these groups into the Blue Economy policy design and implementation processes through dialogue and consultation, taking into account their social and cultural integrity, could enhance opportunities for employment and wealth creation. This would ensure active participation and benefit sharing that can only serve to strengthen the Blue Economy process.

Opportunities

Recent regional efforts have given a major boost to possibilities of increased employment for women in the maritime sector of the Blue Economy. These include the 1st Continental Conference on the Empowerment of African Women in Maritime (CCEAWM) in Luanda, Angola, in March 2015, which promoted the development of a common agenda or platform of action for African maritime women and set up the basis for the creation of an adequate continental institutional framework to support its implementation.

The conference theme, “African Maritime Women: Towards Africa’s Blue Economy (AU 2050 AIMS, AU Agenda 2063),” is also in line with the theme of the 24th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the AU, which was held at its headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 30-31 January 2014 under the theme “Year of Women’s Empowerment and Development Towards Africa’s Agenda 2063.”

The call for action of AU Agenda 2063 seeks to strengthen technical and vocational education and training through scaled-up investments, the establishment of a pool of high-quality Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) centers across Africa, greater links with industry, and alignment with labor markets, with a view to improving the skills profile, employability, and entrepreneurship of especially youth and women, and closing the skills gap across the continent. As is the case with the AU 2050 AIMS, it also seeks to expand knowledge and access to quality early childhood, primary, and secondary education in the fields of the Blue Economy.

Under Aspiration 6 of the AU Agenda 2063: The Vision for 2063, young Africans, both men and women, will be the trailblazers of the African knowledge society and will contribute significantly to innovation and entrepreneurship. The creativity, energy, and innovation of African youth will be the driving force behind the continent’s political, social, cultural, and economic transformation. In this connection, taking into account the potential of the Blue Economy for job creation, it is envisioned that youth employment will increase. Africa’s youth will

have enhanced access to education, training, skills, technology, health services, and recreational and cultural activities. They will also have opportunities to acquire the financial means to allow them to realize their full potential.

States may use this impetus as a motivation to include and incorporate these aspirations in their development agenda in an integrated, intersectoral manner, including through appropriate legislative provisions and policy documents. In particular, efforts should be made to incentivize youth for jobs in the maritime sector, including seafaring, in light of the global decline in the number of youth joining that industry. African countries have an opportunity to address and fill this gap and to create a niche. In order for this to be realized, there is also need for new maritime education centers and/or support to increase the capacity of existing centers. PPPs, such as with the shipping industry, could be explored in order to fund such initiatives.

It is important to link inclusive growth, capacity building, and environmentally sustainable resource management in order to empower women in marine sectors, as illustrated in case study 5.

Case study 5

TRY Oyster Women's Association in The Gambia

The case of the TRY Oyster Women's Association in The Gambia illustrates multiple linkages of the Blue Economy approach ranging from social inclusiveness to capacity building, job creation, and environmentally sustainable management of small-scale operators. Under the Cockle and Oyster Fishery Co-management Plan for the Tanbi Wetlands National Park of 2013, TRY is the first women's association in sub-Saharan Africa to be granted exclusive use rights to a fishery by a national government. Since its founding in 2007, the association has moved from small gatherings of 40 oyster harvesters in one community in the Tanbi to an established group with organized leadership and more than 500 members from 15 communities in the Greater Banjul area.

Harvesters are grouped into cooperatives, in which they exchange sustainable oyster harvesting techniques and receive training in small-scale enterprise development (e.g., financial literacy training and procurement of loans). These cooperatives have ensured access to appropriate equipment and technologies; set higher standards for working and sanitary conditions; and helped to coordinate the processing, packaging, and marketing of oysters, which resulted in more than doubling of the price-per-kilogram for oysters. The cooperatives have also promoted reforestation of local mangroves as members have planted 33.5 hectares of mangroves that are thriving two years later, improved education for a number of children of TRY members, and educated the local population about the benefits of environmentally responsible resource management.

TRY has empowered the oyster women. They have realized the value of cooperation in working toward a common goal. Previously, they had worked as individuals in isolation in poor and worsening economic, social, and environmental conditions. They are now working in solidarity as legally recognized leaders and participants in decision-making for the sustainable management of natural resources in their communities and nationally.

The key factors contributing to TRY's success have been: a participatory process with extensive stakeholder consultation, starting with the women harvesters and including all levels of local and national government; an adaptive management approach based on research of local ecological knowledge and scientific knowledge conducted with stakeholders; research findings and implementation challenges reviewed annually by stakeholders; and interministerial collaboration between the

Case study 5 (cntd.)

Gambian Ministry of Fisheries, the Department of Parks and Wildlife Management, the National Environment Agency, and the Ministry of Forestry and the Environment, all of which had jurisdiction over various aspects of the Tanbi Wetlands National Park.¹

Lessons

The case of the Gambian TRY Oyster Women's Association demonstrates the possibility of linking inclusive growth, capacity building, and environmentally sustainable resource management for female oyster farmers. The Gambian experience also shows that empowerment of women within a Blue Economy sector can be successfully pursued through the proper allocation of resources.

¹ UNEP, GRID-Arendal. This case study is extracted from Green Economy for Oceans: Blue Economy Success Stories (in progress).

Policy guidance

To increase general awareness and active involvement of youth, women, local communities, and underrepresented groups in the Blue Economy debate and the policymaking and implementation process, States would benefit from coordinated efforts around a number of interventions, as exemplified below:

- Establishment of education and training institutions to build the capacity of the Blue Economy. The AU, for example, stresses that States should incorporate the importance of their respective maritime and aquatic zones as part of their geographical territory into their education systems at all levels. The AU is now working toward the establishment of a Scientific Center of Excellence for ocean-related skills development.
- Promotion of the inclusion of youth, women, local communities, and underrepresented groups in all Blue Economy sectors by means of addressing cultural barriers. The development and implementation of Blue Economy national and subregional strategies for States and beneficiary populations should provide pathways to strengthen the role of youth, women, and underrepresented groups in the development of the Blue Economy. This would also contribute to the realization of SDGs related to youth, education, and gender (SDGs 4, 5, and 10).
- Promotion of equitable benefit-sharing throughout the value chain and work with small-scale producers in local communities, such as fishers and

farmers, to establish new market linkages emerging from the Blue Economy. In the case of the fisheries sector, this can be partly addressed by training of processing workers and fish vendors and providing opportunities for access to capital and enhanced retention of revenue.

- Engagement in dialogue with highly vulnerable and poor urban coastal communities to identify and implement measures to reduce their vulnerability and ensure public safety.
- Consider adopting certain elements of the 2012 Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security of the Committee on World Food Security into their national legislation in order to give legal force to the tenure rights of small-scale producers and to the traditional fishing grounds of local communities.²⁷

27 <http://www.fao.org/docrep/016/i2801e/i2801e.pdf> (accessed 27 November 2015)