

# Understanding and acknowledging women's roles in fisheries and aquaculture : Why Gender matters

**Nikita Gopal**

Principal Scientist

ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology

Cochin, Kerala, India

&

Vice Chair, GAF Section of the Asian Fisheries Society



Presentation at the **I International Conference of Women in Fisheries**, Santiago de Compostela, Spain, 5-7 November, 2018



# Concepts

- Gender has been defined as 'a concept that refers to the **social differences**, as opposed to the biological ones, between women and men **that have been learned**, are **changeable** over time and have wide variations both within and between cultures.
- Gender equity refers to the process of **fair and justice treatment** of women and men to reach gender equality.
- Gender equality refers to the **equal enjoyment** by women and men or boys and girls of **rights, opportunities, services and resources**.
- Gender analysis is the **systematic attempt to identify key issues** contributing to gender inequalities so that they can be properly addressed.
  - Gender analysis provides the basis for gender mainstreaming and is described as 'the study of differences in the conditions, needs, participation rates, access to resources and development, control of assets, decision-making powers, etc., between women and men in their assigned gender roles'.

- FAO - feminisation has serious implications for the producers' economic agency and productivity and farm income
- Provided the same access to productive resources as men in the world
  - farm yields could be raised by 20–30%
  - thereby increasing the overall agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5 to 4%
- Besides increasing women's income, this gain in production could lessen hunger in the world by 12–17%.

- Fish is the most traded commodity
- Much of it is caught in the developing countries for sale in the developed world
- The per caput annual fish consumption is an average of 20 kg across the globe

Per caput Food Consumption	2015	2016	2017	Change 2017 over 2016 (%)
Food Fish (Kg/yr)	20.2	20.2	20.3	0.7

<http://www.fao.org/in-action/globefish/fishery-information/resource-detail/en/c/338597/>

- Traditionally fishing (and fisheries) has a man's face.
- Gendered differences in roles which depends on the types of activity being performed
- External factors - physical, social, cultural, political
- Traditionally we tend to look at - Men dominate fishing activities and women involved in post harvest activities.
- However, this does not essentially give women the visibility they deserve.
- Because there is no realisation that 'women's efforts also are behind every bite of fish we taste'
- Without women's work, the fish catch would drop, fish processing and delivery to the consumer would not function, and households would have less access to fish and food.
- Women's contributions to fisheries and aquaculture have long been disregarded.



Source : ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology, Cochin, Kerala, India



Source : ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology, Cochin, Kerala, India

- Almost half the fish sector workers, traders, and marketers are women.
- Women are involved in fishing in inshore and inland waters (rarely sea going; but there are examples of the same); Gleaning; Small scale aquaculture; Fabrication and mending of gear and post harvest activities like sorting and grading, pre-processing, processing, drying and marketing.



Source : ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology, Cochin, Kerala, India



Source : ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology, Cochin, Kerala, India



Source : ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology, Cochin, Kerala, India



Source : ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology, Cochin, Kerala, India



Source : ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology, Cochin, Kerala, India



Source : ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology, Cochin, Kerala, India



Source : ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology, Cochin, Kerala, India



Source : ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology, Cochin, Kerala, India



Source : ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology, Cochin, Kerala, India



Source : ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology, Cochin, Kerala, India



Source : ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology, Cochin, Kerala, India



Source : ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology, Cochin, Kerala, India

- **Why do we actually need to look at gender in aquaculture and fisheries?**

**LOOKING AT IT THROUGH THE GAFS  
JOURNEY**

- GAF has been a journey for formalizing the contributions of women researchers and administrators eventually through a GAF Section
- Starting from personal initiatives to creating a formal institution, along the way discovering why gender matters in aquaculture and fisheries
- Forming new perspectives on where gender research needs to go



Equal contributor: Catching fish using gill net from a river in Indian Sundarban. Photo by *Ranjan Manna*, India

## The journey: Two early influencers

*Asian Fisheries Society linked events initiated by Dr M.C. Nandeesh*

*WorldFish engagement with women in aquaculture began with Dr M.V. Gupta*

WIKIPEDIA

### M.C. Nandeesh

**Mudnakudu Channabasappa Nandeesh** (1 July 1957 – 27 December 2012) was a development researcher, innovative aquaculture development worker and educator.<sup>[1]</sup> He is recognized for making critical contributions to the rapid growth of aquaculture<sup>[2][3]</sup> by applying research to key bottlenecks to fish production. In India, he conducted successful pioneering field tests of Ovaprim, an ovulating agent, under different agro-climatic conditions to help remove a critical early barrier for freshwater fish breeding. His significant scientific contributions include simplified breeding technology for cyprinids and development of feeds and feeding techniques appropriate to rural aquaculture,<sup>[3]</sup> and helping improve and spread the practices of small scale fish farming at a time when most attention was on large scale producers.<sup>[2]</sup> He wrote a regular and widely acclaimed column in Network of Aquaculture Centers in Asia-Pacific (NACA) "Aquaculture Asia" magazine on farmer innovations in aquaculture.<sup>[3]</sup> He was described as an "ambassador for aquaculture and was especially noted for promoting aquaculture for the disadvantaged poor households and women."<sup>[3]</sup> Along with Michael New, in 2003 he was a founding member of the not-for-profit organisation, Aquaculture without Frontiers.<sup>[3]</sup> While encouraging poor people to take up aquaculture, he was also a pioneer in promoting equity for women, who had been neglected in the aquaculture boom.<sup>[3][4]</sup> Throughout his career, he was in the forefront of initiatives to upgrade the professionalism of fisheries and aquaculture experts,<sup>[5]</sup> and inspired peers and students in critical new directions.<sup>[1]</sup>

His professional career, which began in the 1980s, made significant contributions during the important early rapid development of Indian, Asian and world aquaculture. In this period, aquaculture became and remains the fastest growing food production sector.<sup>[6]</sup> For Indian major crops (see rice, mung and soya), of which about 5 million tonnes are now produced annually (compared to just over one thousand tonnes in 1980).<sup>[1][6][7]</sup> M.C. Nandeesh established critical improved breeding and seed production approaches,<sup>[2][3][4][8][9]</sup> and feed and nutrition regimes.<sup>[1][7][8][9]</sup> and began his promotion of women's roles and the need for gender equality in fisheries and aquaculture.<sup>[2][9][1]</sup> In Cambodia, he pioneered the spread of small scale fish farming and fish seed production.<sup>[2][2]</sup> In Bangladesh, he encouraged farmer-participatory research and elevated the importance of the role of women in

M.C. Nandeesh



**Born** Mudnakudu Channabasappa Nandeesh  
1 July 1957  
Mudnakudu, Karnataka, India

**Died** 27 December 2012 (aged 55)

**Nationality** Indian

**Known for** Aquaculture research  
Promoting gender equality  
Supporting farmer innovations  
Aquaculture professionalisation

**Awards** 2008: Sahametrei award (Krajig), Cambodia  
2012: Fellow, The World Aquaculture Society



THE WORLD  
FOOD PRIZE

2005: Gupta



Dr. Modadugu Gupta

INDIA

**DR. MODADUGU V. GUPTA WAS NAMED** the 2005 World Food Prize Laureate for his exceptional achievement in enriching the diets and lives of the world's most impoverished families. As a prime architect of a "blue revolution" in Asia and around the globe, Dr. Modadugu V. Gupta has increased the protein and mineral content in the diets of over one million of the world's most impoverished families. His promotion of aquaculture has contributed to the economic and social empowerment of men and women in poor and rural areas

where most lack the means to improve their own lives. Dedicated to improving the world's fish supply, Dr. Gupta has built a global network of like-minded scientists, managers, and leaders. The millions whom his work has impacted span several continents and range from international experts to landless farmers.

# A 28 year **journey**: forming the Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries Section (of the Asian Fisheries Society)

1990	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Workshop on Women in Fisheries in India, AFSIB</b></li> </ul>
1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>National Workshop on Women in Cambodian Fisheries, PADEK.</b></li> </ul>
1995	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Iloilo Resolution on The Role of Women in Fisheries Development in the Asia-Pacific</b></li> <li>• <b>4th UN World Conference on Women, Beijing, China</b></li> </ul>
1995	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Women in Fisheries photo competition, 4AFF, China, PADEK &amp; AFS</b></li> </ul>
1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Women in Fisheries in Indo-China Countries Seminar, PADEK</b></li> </ul>
*** 1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>International Symposium on Women in Asian Fisheries, 5AFF, Thailand, AFS and ICLARM.</b></li> </ul>
2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Global Symposium on Women in Fisheries, 6AFF, Taiwan, by AFS &amp; ICLARM – The WorldFish Center</b></li> </ul>
2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>GAF: Global Symposium on GAF, 7AFF, Malaysia, AFS and WorldFish Center</b></li> </ul>
2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>GAF2, 8AFF, India, GAF network meeting</b></li> </ul>
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>GAF3, 9AFAP, China, GAF network meeting</b></li> </ul>
2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>GAF4, 10AFAP, Korea, GAF network meeting</b></li> </ul>
2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>GAF5, 10IFAF, India, GAF network meeting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries ***</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>United Nations Global Goals for Sustainable Development ***</b></li> </ul>
2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>GAF6, 11AFAP, Thailand, GAF network and Partners; GAF-101 training</b></li> </ul>
*** 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries Section, Asian Fisheries Society formed</b></li> <li>• <b>GAF-India, 11IFAF, India, AFSIB, by GAFS, AFSIB and ICSF</b></li> </ul>
2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>GAF7, Asian Institute of Technology and GAFS; GAF-101 training</b></li> </ul>

# On the journey, documented typical feminist pathways

- Noticing that fisheries/aquaculture are seen as masculine
  - Women do fish! [WIF Asia 1998]
- Investigating omissions and "adding women"
  - Where are the women in fisheries? [WIF Global 2001]
- Adding women and adding gender
  - From women in fisheries to gender and fisheries [WIF Global 2001]
  - ...the first global look at the gender dimensions of fisheries [GAF1 2004]
- Seeking greater equality, recognising intersectionality and social norms
  - gender & development [GAF2 2007]
  - moving the agenda forward [GAF3 2011]
  - navigating change [GAF4 2013]
  - the long journey to equality [GAF5 2014]
  - engendering security [GAF6 2014]
  - expanding the horizons [GAF7 2018]

Along the way, we found why gender matters  
in fisheries and aquaculture by  
*synthesising insights from a plethora of  
research results and deciding what is to be  
done*

- **Often women have little say over the benefits available to them and receive little support in their work.**
- **Their practical and long-term needs are often neglected.**
- **They have weak bargaining power to change their situation due to historical gender biases normalized in the workplace and society.**
- **For women working in fisheries and aquaculture, gender inequality affects their food and financial security, personal safety, family nutrition, and the stability of whole communities.**
- **These problems are worsening as the industry experiences pressure to minimize labour costs and leans toward fishing and aquaculture practices that degrade the environment and fish stocks.**
- **This creates a vicious cycle of worsening environmental and social conditions on which all women and men depend.**
- **This is why gender matters.**

Source: Why gender matters; GAFS of the AFS

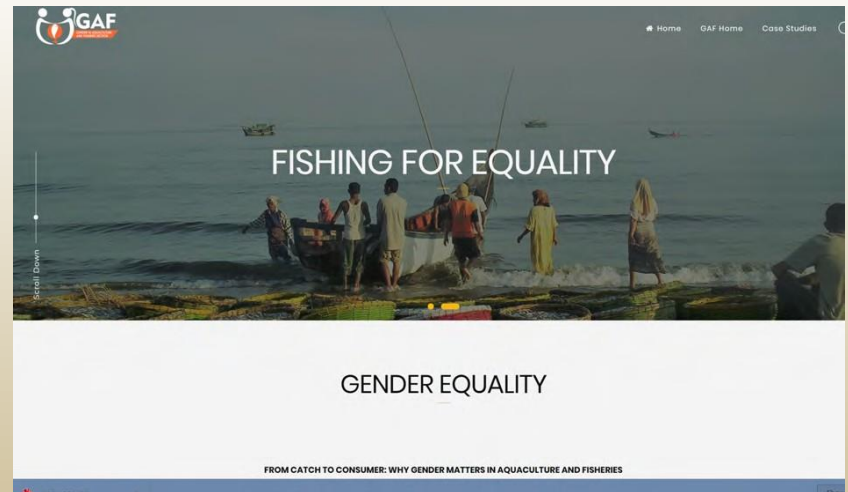
## **WE FOUND LARGE CONSTRAINTS FOR WOMEN**

- Women have smaller enterprises, lower pay, riskier work
- Gender-blind policies and lack of sex-disaggregated data undermine women's contributions
- Women have to fight for their basic rights and decision-making power
- Fisheries and aquaculture modernization has downsides for women

## **AND LARGE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIETY**

- Women's empowerment and group action help overcome constraints
- The whole fish sector wins when women's contributions are valued
- Society and the environment benefit when women are empowered
- Women fish workers are the key to fish as nutrition
- Integrating women into action on climate change and natural disaster relief benefits households and communities

[www.genderequality.genderaquafish.org](http://www.genderequality.genderaquafish.org)



# What needs to be done.....

- *COUNT WOMEN AND MAKE THEM VISIBLE: FAO's Committee on Fisheries can put gender equality on its agenda. Fisheries agencies can collect regular and accurate gender-specific catch-to-consumer employment data to track trends and progress.*
- *INCREASE FUNDING TO GENDER HUNDREDFOLD: Make greater investment in targeted gender projects, research and educational outreach. The present quantum is so small and needs a hundredfold increase to achieve impact.*
- *SUPPORT WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT: Women can collaborate, assert their rights and upgrade their capacity, if necessary with funding and support for education, advocacy and legal resources. Men's and male-led organizations can become allies in enhancing women's autonomy over their lives and livelihoods.*
- *COLLABORATE ON GENDER: To make the invisible visible, gender equality must be a stated priority in policy, research, and programs, and expertise built in the key agencies along the catch-consumer pathway.*

- *The critical players in advancing gender equality in fisheries are: fisheries agencies, including national and leading international organizations, especially the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); development assistance funders; private companies, small and large, in all parts of the catch-to-consumer pathway; fisheries, aqua- culture and gender researchers; and grassroots women, community groups and civil society.*

**Thank You**