



# Sailing towards economic autonomy: mexican fisherwomen before and during the pandemic

Comunidad y Biodiversidad A.C.

D. Pinedo, I. López-Ercilla, N. Solano, J. Torre, F.J. Fernández Rivera Melo

# Fisherowomen in Mexico

- Women play an important role in the social and environmental dynamics of coastal communities.
- Their contributions are often invisible, ignored or unrecognized.
- Limited access to decision-making spaces, an unequal distribution of household tasks and a digital divide that limits autonomy and equal opportunities.
- Lack of sufficient data disaggregated by gender.
- Underestimation of other activities that take place in fisheries and where women participate on a daily basis.

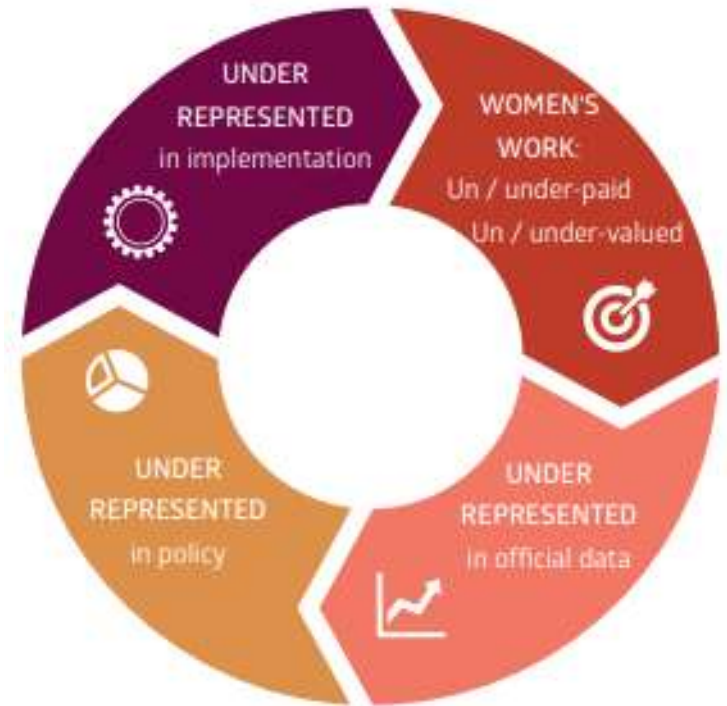


Figure 1. Women's work and the cycle of invisibility (FAO,2017).

# Sailing against the current: fisherwomen and COVID-19



Figure 2. Author photography: M. García, La Paz, Baja California Sur, Pescando el Momento.

- The market closure impacted a social and economic activity that sustains food security, income and employment for families of around **300,000 small-scale fishers** in Mexico (CONAPESCA, 2018).
- It is estimated that for every two workers in the fisheries and aquaculture sector, one is a women (FAO,2020).
- The COVID-19 pandemic deepened and highlighted the pre-existing inequalities between men and women in the fishing sector.

# Sailing against the current: fisherwomen and COVID-19

- Results of the consultation with 220 fishers (57 women, 163 men) with the objective of documenting the impacts of COVID on men and women in fishing communities.



Figure 3. Cover of the report “Gender Equality at sea? An analysis during the pandemic by COVID 19”.

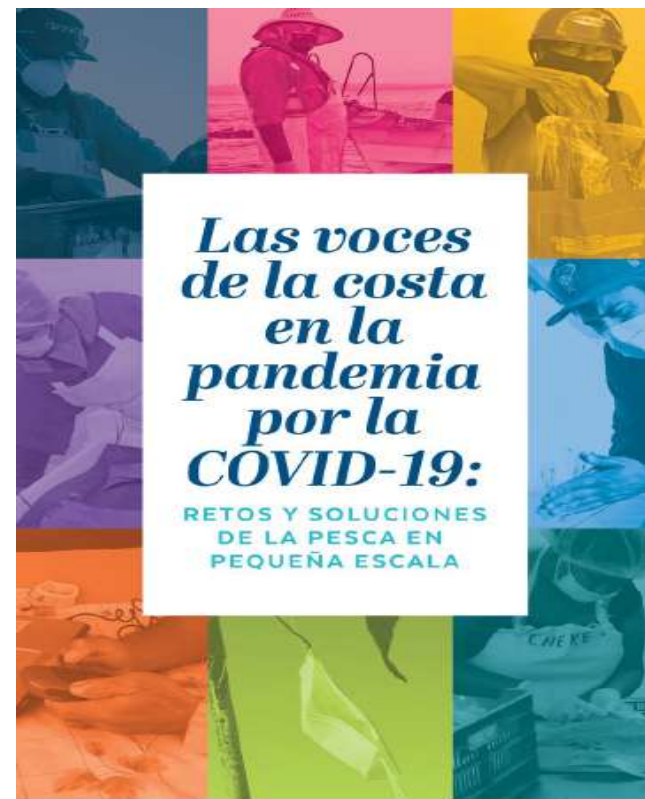


Figure 4. Cover of the book “Coastal voices in the pandemic by COVID-19”.

# Gender Equality at sea: An analysis during the pandemic by COVID 19

- *Access to medical information and services, and use of protective measures*

50% of the men interviewed said they were affiliated with a health system, compared to 39% of the women interviewed

- *Economic and employment security*

45% of participants report that women in their community are doing some alternative economic activity to support their family during the crisis.

- *Access to supports and benefits*

Of the total number of people interviewed, 166 received a government financial support (78% men and 22% women). The support granted was mainly for people involved in extraction.



Figure 5. Author photography: A.Romero, Bahía Asunción, Baja California Sur, Pescando el Momento.

# Sailing towards economic autonomy

- What conditions are necessary for fisherwomen to endure in leadership positions and to sustain their marine conservation and sustainable fisheries projects?
- We analyzed the empowerment process (2017-2021) (Kabeer,1997) of 15 fisherwomen to identify the conditions that allowed their marine conservation projects to be sustained despite the impacts of COVID-19.



Figure 5. Fisherwomen doing biological monitoring.

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Figure 6. Fisherwomen teaching a workshop on wetsuit repair.

- The average age of the fisherwomen is 37 years old.
- 87% of them are mothers
- 93% have a support network (partner, family, friends).
- 67% of the fisherwomen have been part of at least two training processes.
- 53% of them have been part of the *Community Leadership Program*, implemented by COBI.

# Sailing towards economic autonomy

- 74% of them have participated in monitoring activities
- 60% have applied for public or private funding.
- 58% have exercised their capacity to invest in activities that contribute to their economic autonomy, such as forming a tourism cooperative or starting a business.

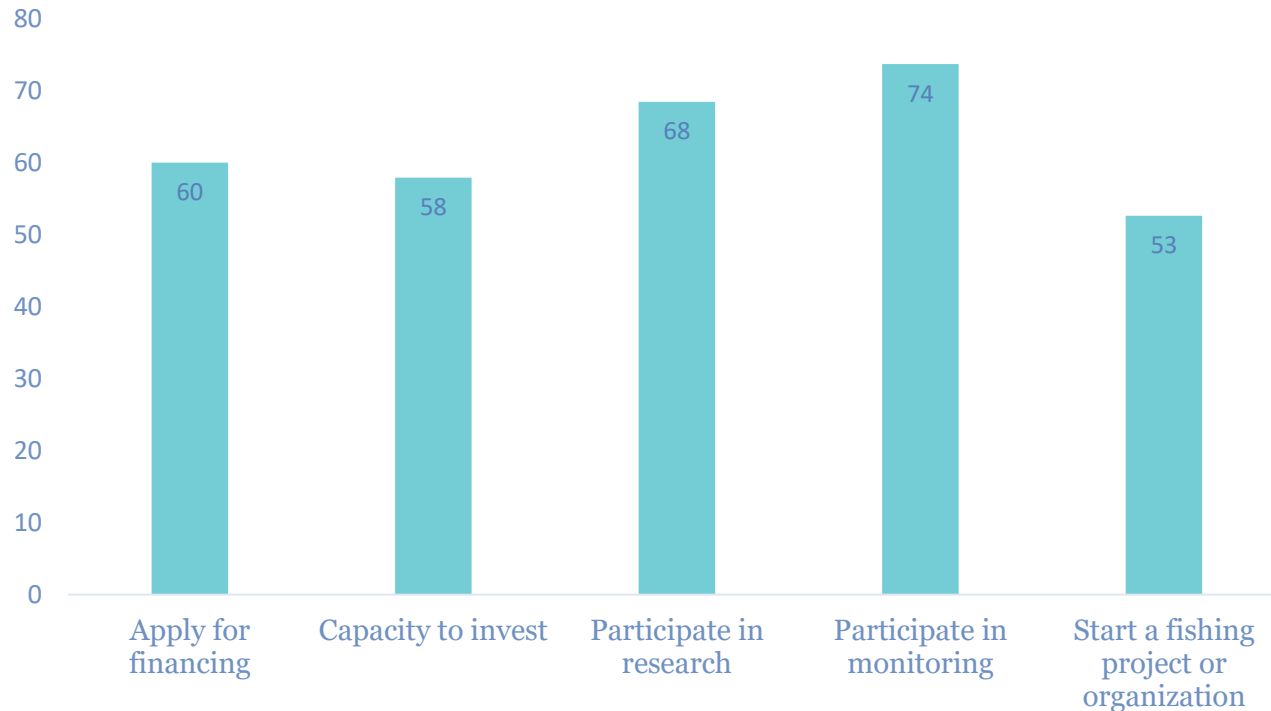


Figure 7. Results of different agencies.



# Sailing towards economic autonomy



Figure 8. Fisherwomen speaking at the *Community Leadership Program*.

- Before the pandemic, empowered women began to be recognized as leaders in their communities and fishing cooperatives.
- During the pandemic, women played a key role as the main caregivers, in addition to leading tasks that contributed to their household economy.
- One of the main underlying structural factors that stand out in both analysis and that must be transformed to avoid deepening gender inequalities is the lack of financing alternatives that contribute to women's economic autonomy and sustainability.

# Reflections into first steps towards economic autonomy

Economic autonomy is explained as *“women's capacity to generate their own income and resources through access to paid work on equal terms with men. This concept considers the use of time and the contribution of women to the economy”* (CEPAL,2019).

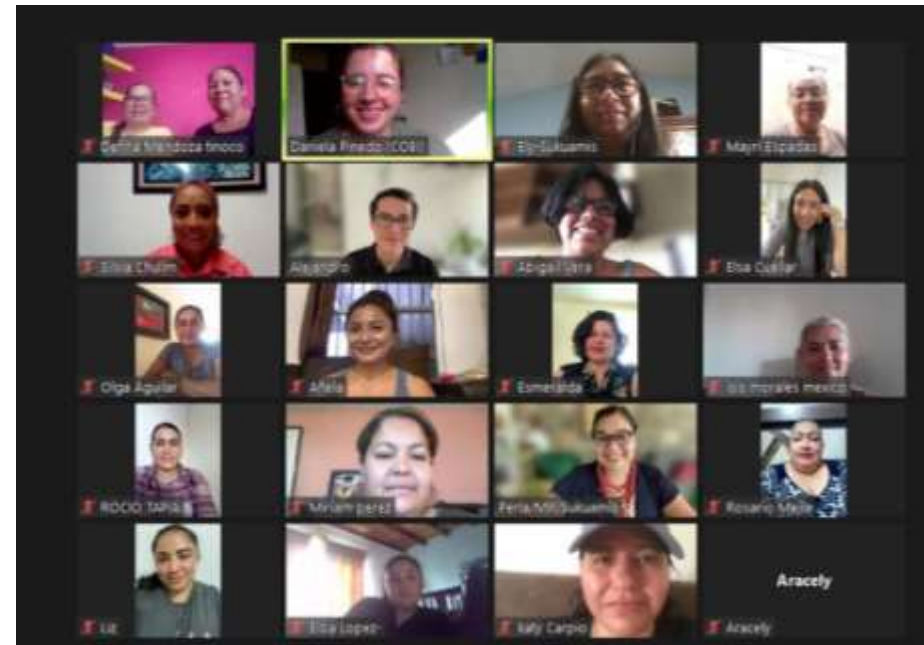


Figure 9. Fisherwomen in a virtual workshop on alternative financing.

# Key considerations of these first steps...

- Encourage initiatives that promote economic autonomy must consider the community contexts in which they live.
- Continue to reinforce that fisheries are more than extraction phase and women contribute to the fisheries value networks.
- Recognize that economic autonomy not only benefits women, but also their families and communities. Promote (Contingency funds, solidarity credits, saving funds).
- Linking personal experiences and structural processes makes it possible to build critical thinking among youth and women.
- It is important to offer flexible and accessible funding opportunities for women.



Figure 10. Fishers working together at the end of the day.



*Thank you!*

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